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THE WORKS

OF THE

LEARNED AND REVEREND

JOHN SCOTT, D. D.

SOMETIME RECTOR OF ST. GILES'S IN THE FIELDS.

A NEW EDITION, IN SIX VOLUMES.

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UPON

MATTHEW XVI. 24.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

IN the twenty-first verse our Saviour declares to his disciples, that it was necessary for him to *go up to Jerusalem*, and there to *suffer many things, and to be killed, and be raised again the third day.* Upon which St. Peter rebukes him, ver. 22. saying, *Be it far from thee*, or, as it may be rendered, Be propitious to thyself; *this shall not be unto thee.* But Jesus, considering this was the work he came into the world for, tartly rebukes him; *Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men:* i. e. Thou talkest as if thou didst not yet understand what God hath foretold of me, viz. that I shall be advanced to my kingdom by my sufferings; and as if thou wert merely guided by rules of human policy; according to which, to expose one's self to calamities and death is a very odd way to glory and empire. But I tell thee, Peter, that it is not only certain that I must suffer, in order to my advancement, but that *those also that will come after me must deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow me.* In the management of which words, I shall endeavour these three things:

I. To shew you what is here meant by *denying ourselves.*

II. What abundant cause and reason there is for it.

III. How absolutely necessary it is to our eternal happiness.

I. What is here meant by *denying ourselves.* In general, by *ourselves* here we are not to understand our nature, considered as it is the creature and workmanship of God: for God hath endowed us with rational faculties, and stamped immutable principles of reason upon our minds; which principles we are so far from being obliged to renounce, that they are the fundamental laws of our nature, by which we ought to regulate all our motions and actions. By *ourselves* therefore we are to understand *our sinful selves,* or our corrupt nature, as it is under the power and dominion of wicked principles and inclinations; for so *ourselves* doth in scripture many times denote *our sinful and corrupt selves.* And so, 2 Tim. iii. 2. it is made a character of bad men, that *they should be lovers of their own selves:* whereas in strictness, to love ourselves is so far from being a fault, that it is a necessary instinct of nature, and the root and principle of our virtue. By *loving our own selves,* therefore, must be here meant, being indulgent to the vicious inclinations of our nature, as he explains himself in the following words, *being covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,* &c. And accordingly Christ is said to have *died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves,* i. e. to their corrupt principles and inclinations, *but unto him which died for them,* 2 Cor. v. 15. By *ourselves*

therefore, here, we are to understand every thing in us that is opposite to God, every motion and inclination of our nature that stands in competition with his will, and doth any way contend with his authority. For the soul of man is a throne, to which God and its corrupt nature are rivals: God claims it by a natural and essential right, as he is the Sovereign of beings and Lord of the creation: corrupt nature claims it, without any pretence of right; but, like a barefaced usurper, derives its propriety from its possession, and will rule, because it will, and because it hath got strength and interest enough to support its dominion. So that to deny ourselves is to renounce our corrupt nature, and to refuse to be governed by it, and wholly to resign up ourselves to the government of God; to abandon those evil inclinations which are God's competitors in us, and would countermand his will, and usurp his dominion. In a word, to deny ourselves, is to give away ourselves from ourselves to God; to put all our powers of action out of our own disposal into God's, and not suffer any desire or inclination of our own to take place of his will, or prevail against his authority. And therefore as they are said to deny God who reject his authority, in compliance with the corrupt inclinations of their nature, Tit. i. 16. so they may be truly said to deny themselves, who refuse to gratify those vicious inclinations in compliance with the will of God. In short therefore, *to deny ourselves* is to prefer God's will before our own, to sacrifice our inclinations to our duty, and in all competitions between him and our carnal interests and affections, to take his part, and follow his command and directions.

II. I proceed to the second thing proposed, which is, to shew you what abundant reason there is for this duty; and this will evidently appear, if we consider seriously how much more advantageous it is in all respects for men to be ruled by God, than by themselves; to follow his will, and comply with his pleasure, rather than give up ourselves to the government of his rival, viz. the appetites and inclinations of our own corrupt nature; which will evidently appear in these following particulars:

1. By thus denying our own will in compliance with the will of God, we shall choose and act with much more ease and freedom.

2. We shall choose and act with much more evenness and consistency.

3. We shall choose and act with much more peace and satisfaction.

4. We shall choose and act with much more prudence and conduct.

5. We shall choose and act with much more security of the event.

1. By denying our own will, to comply with God's, we shall choose and act with much more ease and freedom. He that makes his own will his law, is upon every new occasion put upon new deliberations; and upon every change of circumstances is fain to change his will, and to consult new choices and resolutions; in debating of which he is commonly so mazed and bewildered with cross thoughts and opposite counsels and deliberations, that he hardly knows which way to determine himself; is more at a loss what to resolve upon, than how to execute his resolution. And being thus clogged and encumbered in the whole course of his motion, how

is it possible he should act with any ease and freedom? But now when once a man has renounced his own will, and entirely submitted himself to the direction of God's, he is free from this toil and encumbrance. For the will of God, as to all the material parts of our duty, is so plainly revealed, that an honest mind with little inquiry may be soon informed and satisfied about it; and when once it is so, all its choices are already determined, so far as they are concerned in the matter of its duty: for God's will being his, he no sooner knows that, but he rests in it immediately with a free assent and uncontrolled approbation, and whatsoever the event be, he is fixed to one steady course of motion; being resolved once for all, whatever happens, to do as God would have him. So that when once a man hath entirely denied himself, and put himself out of his own disposal into God's, God chooses for him, and thereby frees him from all the trouble of doubting, and deliberating, and disputing *pro* and *con*; of being distracted between contrary reasons, and bandied to and fro by cross and opposite importunities. For now his soul, acquiescing in God, as in its proper place and element, doth no more dispute, no longer waves between two loadstones; but being [in] unison with God, resounds and echoes to his will, and freely follows him without deliberation.

2. By denying our own will, to comply with God's, we shall choose and act with much more evenness and consistency. For so long as men live in subjection to the principles and inclinations of their corrupt nature, it is impossible they should act evenly and consistently with themselves: for our corrupt nature is wholly governed by the goods and

evils that are without us, and without our power and disposal; by gain and loss, by ease and pain, by applause and disgrace; and therefore all its pleasures and displeasures must be as casual and contingent, as the goods and evils are from whence they do arise. And whilst we are governed by such casual things as these, we are not our own men, but do live in subjection to a foreign power, and must be what these things that govern us will have us; we must turn as the wind blows, and, like water, take our form from the vessels we are poured into. And while the passions and appetites that overrule us are thus overruled by the chances and contingencies without us, we must of necessity be as various, as fickle, and as multiform as they; we must put on as many humours as fortune doth countenances, and shift our pleasures and displeasures upon every turn of her wheel: in a word, we must be as various, inconsistent, and contradictory to ourselves, as the chances and accidents are that do befall us. Now what a wretched state is this, for a man to be never the same; but be continually wreathing and distorting his humour into all the antic figures of his outward condition, which change and vary almost every moment! Doubtless, that man will find enough to do, that shall undertake to make faces after an ape; but he will find a great deal more, that will needs be aping an inconstant fortune through all its grimaces and changes of countenance.

But now he that hath throughly learned to deny himself, and to submit entirely to the government of God, is all of a piece, and throughout even and constant with himself. He is for the main the same man when he loses as when he gains; when he is

reproached, as when he is applauded; and the reason is, because he governs himself, not by the uncertain contingencies that are without him, but by the immutable will that is above him; and while he doth so, he knows that his happiness is as much above the reach of the impotent malice of fortune and men, as the moon is above the noise of those impertinent curs that sit yelping and barking at her from below. And being under the command of one rule, which is the will of God, and one end, which is the enjoyment of God, he goes evenly on in a calm and composed current of action through all the changes and vicissitudes without him; and all his motions and designs, choices and prosecutions, continue as uniform and consistent with themselves in the midst of the various contingencies of this world, as the sovereign will is that commands and determines them.

3. By denying our own will, to comply with God's, we shall choose and act with much more peace and satisfaction. So long as a man governs himself by the appetites and inclinations of his corrupt nature, it is impossible he should ever be satisfied with himself: for besides that his own reason will reproach and upbraid him with the natural filthiness and turpitude of his actions, and represent them to himself as shameful and inglorious; besides which, I say, his own conscience will be ever and anon vexing and plaguing him with anxious and unquiet thoughts and reflections. For God hath imprinted a dread of his own power and majesty so deep upon our natures, that with all our arts we are not able to deface and obliterate it; and though for some time, perhaps, we may suppress and stupify it, yet in despite of ourselves it will first or last re-

turn again upon us, and avenge the affronts and violences we have offered it. Whilst therefore a man sides with his corrupt nature against God, it is impossible he should be throughly satisfied with himself: for either his reason will be upbraiding him with the filthiness of his actions, or his conscience will be alarming him with the vengeance that is due to them.

But when once a man hath throughly denied his own will and affections, and entirely resigned up himself to the government of God, he will be able to produce God's own will and command for the warrant of his choices and actions; and this will effectually discharge him at the tribunals of his reason and conscience. For why should our reason shame, or our conscience terrify us, so long as we choose and act in subordination to God? For so long as we do thus, our will and actions are his; and being clothed in the livery of his authority, are thereby sufficiently protected both from shame and fear. For why should I be ashamed to do as God wills me, whose will is so entirely righteous and good, that I am sure it can never be displeasing to his nature? Whilst therefore I choose and act in submission to God, what should hinder me from being as courageous as truth, and as confident as innocence itself? For so long my conscience must not only acquit me, but reverence me. So that now my soul, which heretofore lived in thunders, and lightnings, and storms, will dwell above in a serene ether, and there breathe nothing but calm and gentle thoughts; and instead of those uneasy reflections that were wont to disturb my pleasant scenes of mirth, I shall be continually entertained with the silent melodies

of a clear conscience, and crowned with the applauses of my own mind.

4. By denying our own will, to comply with God's, we shall choose and act with much more prudence and conduct. Did we understand either God or ourselves, we could not but be sensible, that it is much more for our interest to be governed by his will than by our own. For though there is no doubt but we wish well to ourselves, and would not wilfully prejudice our own interest, yet it is to be considered, that there is the same benevolence towards us in God's will: besides which, God's will hath an infinite wisdom to steer by, which sees through all the intrigues of our interest, and hath an entire prospect of whatsoever can hinder or advance it. Whereas our wills are generally guided either by a blind sense or by a shortsighted reason, that many times mistakes our interest, and directs us to rocks instead of harbours. And when the disadvantage on this side is so great and apparent, how can we imagine ourselves so safe under the government of our own wills, as we are under the government of God's? He would have us do this, and we would do the quite contrary; and yet we acknowledge his will is as kind and benign to us as ours is to ourselves. Why then, which of the two wills do we think is the wisest? God's, sure, we will all acknowledge. Well then, is it not much safer for us to take the sun for our guide, than to grope by the twinkling light of a glow-worm? While we follow our own will, every step, for all we know, may plunge us into bogs and quagmires; but while we follow God's, we choose as wisely for ourselves, as an infinite wisdom can direct us. So that what our will chooses may be

good for us; but what his will chooses must be so; and therefore, to be sure, whenever we choose contrary to him, we choose against our own interest. I am as confident of this, as of any principle in nature and religion, that whatsoever God commands me to do, he must certainly know that it is for my good, and that is the reason why he commands it; and if it be, then this I am equally sure of, that whensoever I act contrary to his command, I run from a certain benefit to a certain mischief. But while I submit my will to God's, I am guided by God's wisdom; and in every genuine act of obedience, I am as infallible as omniscience itself. Whilst therefore I am in the exercise of my duty, I am sure I am safe, because I am under the direction of a will that can never be misled, and so can never mislead me. And had any thing he commanded been hurtful to me, I know he is so good that he would never have enjoined it; yea, had any thing been but indifferent to me, I know he is so wise that he would never have concerned himself or me about it. And if he hath commanded me nothing that is either hurtful or indifferent to me, it is doubtless richly worth my while to obey him even in the smallest and most inconsiderable instances.

What a mighty advantage therefore have those happy persons who have entirely renounced their own wills, and submitted themselves to God's? For whilst others, poor wretches! do grope about, under the conduct of their own blind wills, and do they know not what, and go they know not whither themselves, but live by chance, and act at random; they are conducted in all their choices and actions by an all-wise will, that never fails to measure their

actions by the best rules, and point them to the best ends. So that while they move by the directions of that heavenly guide, they are sure of their ends, and do know infallibly beforehand, that all their choices and actions shall finally conspire in their own happiness.

5. And lastly, By denying our own wills, to comply with God's, we shall choose and act with much more security of the event. One of the great causes why men's minds are so unquiet and anxious is, that they are not able to discover the events of their own designs and actions; and it is this that makes them so doubtful and tremulous in their motions, and causes them to act with so much caution and anxiety; because they are not able to pry into those hidden events that lurk in the womb of their designs. Now while men give up themselves to follow the inclinations of their own corrupt nature, they cannot but be fearful of the ill consequents; especially when they consider, that the consequents of their actions are in the hands of God, against whom they are in rebellion. For our understanding being our leading faculty, and the eye that is to direct our practice; it is impossible, that whilst that doth either disapprove or doubt our actions, we should ever be able to act with steadiness and assurance: for while a man acts with a misgiving mind, and that which should be the guide of his actions is dissatisfied with his way, he walks like a benighted traveller in a dangerous road, and is fain to feel out his steps, and tread cautiously, lest he should stumble into a bog or a precipice. Whilst therefore a man knows that his actions are displeasing to God, and considers that the events of them are in God's hands, he

must be very unreasonable, if he expect to be blessed and prospered in them; he must either conclude, that God's displeasure is nothing but a dead and ineffectual passion, or that his way of expressing it is by smiles and endearments. So that whilst we take part with our corrupt nature against God, we can never have any rational security of the events of our actions, but must see abundant cause, if we do not wilfully shut our eyes, to be afraid of every thing that happens to us; because nothing can happen to us but by his disposal, whom we daily incense and provoke.

But now, he who hath sincerely resigned up himself to God, knows enough of the events of his own actions, to set his heart at rest, and keep his mind in a quiet enjoyment of itself: for he acts with the full consent and approbation of his mind, and hath no by-ways from the road of his reason and conscience; but keeping straight-forwards, as he doth, in the plain tracts of eternal goodness, he treads firmly and boldly, being secure of the ground he goes upon, and is neither ashamed nor afraid of his own actions; which being such as his best and purest reason approves, have the cheerful euges and applauses of his conscience continually echoing and resounding after them. And when a man is well satisfied that his ways are pleasing to God, he may cheerfully expect, that the end and events of them will be blessed and prosperous; he may build upon it, that God will first or last express the pleasure he takes in his actions, by crowning them with a happy success; and that how grievous soever any present event of his righteous actions may be, yet there is a great deal of righteousness in it, because it proceeds

from the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness; and that in the winding up of the bottom, that which now seems most grievous will be found most beneficial to him. For suppose I have an infallible physician, whom I know to be my friend, constantly attending on me, and ordering my diet, my physic, and my exercise; how securely should I live, and how cheerfully should I follow all his rules and prescriptions! Should he order me a coarse or a distasteful diet, I should thus conclude with myself: Well, I am sure this is for my health; and how nauseous soever it be at present, I know I shall be the better for it as long as I live: and this would render it very grateful and palatable. Should he prescribe a strong and painful purgative, I should thus conclude: Well, this is to remove or prevent a disease that will be much more painful than all the present gripes and twinges it gives me; and I am sure it will have its effect, and set me perfectly at ease within a very few moments: and this consideration would turn my pain into pleasure. In a word, should he impose upon me a toilsome and laborious exercise, I should resolve thus within myself: Well, though I stretch and sweat for it now, I shall certainly be the better for it anon, and reap many years health and vigour from my present toil and weariness; and this reflection would convert a drudgery into a recreation. And yet this is the real case of those men, who have entirely denied their own wills, to choose and act in subordination to God: for he is an infallible physician, and they have made him their friend, by submitting themselves to him, and putting their lives and interests in his hands: and therefore, since as he is God, and their friend, he

cannot but know and design what is good for them, they have all the security in the world, that every thing he orders them shall conduce to their good, so long as they follow his prescriptions; and that he will order them nothing but what they would order for themselves, if they were but as infallible as he is, and did fully comprehend all his reason: and in a word, that though this or that event may be for the present very troublesome in its operations, yet, if they do not hinder the effect of it by their own irregularity, it shall certainly conduce to their everlasting health and happiness. And under this persuasion, how cheerfully may a man bear up under all events, and welcome the worst that can happen to him: for being secure of the infallibility of God's skill, and of the sincerity of his kindness to him, he hath abundant reason to conclude, that since all events are under God's disposal, he will take effectual care, that nothing shall happen to him but what is for his good. For while his will is subject to God's, his condition is a thousand times more safe and secure, than if God's will were subject to his; because though there be the same benevolence to him in both, yet his will might mislead God's, but God's will cannot mislead his.

And thus I have endeavoured to represent to you the abundant advantages that do arise from self-denial, i. e. from renouncing our own corrupt will and inclination, and entirely submitting ourselves to the will of God; which are such, one would think, should prevail with any man that doth but love himself, and sincerely respect his own interest. For this is a certain truth, and as much confirmed by experience as any maxim in philosophy, that there is no state in

human life in which a man can be happy, whilst his own corrupt will is his law; nor none in which he can be miserable, whilst he is entirely resigned and devoted to the will of God.

III. I now proceed to the third and last thing proposed; which was, to shew you how absolutely necessary it is to our eternal happiness, that, in obedience to God, we should deny our own will and corrupt inclinations: and this will evidently appear, if we consider,

1. That the disposal of our happiness is not in our own will, but God's.

2. That the standard of our perfection is not our own will, but God's.

3. That the conformity of our nature to our happiness consists not in what we will, but in what God wills.

4. That the essential acts and ingredients of our happiness are not what we will, but what God wills.

1. That the disposal of our happiness is not in our own will, but in God's. If we would be everlastingly happy, we must comply with that blessed will upon which our everlasting happiness depends; and the apostle assures us, that *eternal life is the gift of God.* If it were in our power to support and defend ourselves in a blissful existence to all eternity, we might with some confidence set up for independent free-willers, and live as we list; and after we have followed the swing of our own corrupt inclinations in this world, promise to ourselves an eternity of happiness in the other. But, alas! we are a sort of poor precarious beings, that are beholden to God for every breath we draw, and for every moment of our

existence and duration; and if he should withdraw from us the vital influence of his providence but for the twinkling of an eye, we should be so far from continuing happy, that we should vanish into nothing. And therefore if we intend to be happy for ever, it is necessary we should submit ourselves to his will, upon whom every moment of our being depends. For, when, merely by withdrawing his arm from us, he can let us drop into nothing when he pleases; how can we hope, when we will not be ruled by him, to be upheld by him in a happy being for ever? Can we think that the wise and holy Governor of the world will be so regardless of his own authority, as to sustain and uphold his subjects in their rebellions against him, unless it be with a design to reduce them, or to make them everlasting monuments of his vengeance? No, no; since our being and well-being doth for ever depend upon him, we may build upon it, that either he will be obeyed by us, or that he will not so uphold us, as to encourage us in our rebellion; and consequently, that if he doth uphold us for ever, as he hath declared he will, it will be with a dreadful purpose, viz. to continue us in an everlasting ill-being, and hang us up in chains for public spectacles of his vengeance, that all his creation may take warning by us. Wherefore, if we are resolved to adhere to our own will, in opposition to God's, it is in vain for us to aspire after a happy being hereafter, unless we can find some way to deprive God of the disposal of it, and secure it in our own power. For so long as God remains the sole arbitrator of our fate, we must make his will ours, or renounce all our hopes of happiness.

2. It is to be considered, that the standard of our

perfection is not our own wills, but God's. For the faculties of every nature being the senses by which it perceives and enjoys its own happiness, it is impossible we should ever enjoy a perfect happiness, so long as the faculties by which we are to enjoy it are imperfect. Ours therefore being a rational nature, all whose motions are under the direction of an understanding, and the command of a free-will, is framed and designed for a rational happiness; which it is as impossible for us perfectly to enjoy, whilst our rational faculties are out of order, as it is to perceive the pleasures of delicious meats, and sounds, and odours, whilst the sensories of our taste, and smell, and hearing are discomposed and obstructed by any bodily disorder. But now, while we follow our own will in contradistinction to God's, our rational nature is all over out of tune: for whereas, according to the true order and constitution of our nature, our understanding is to guide our will, and our will to command all our passions and appetites; so far forth as our will swerves and deflects from God's, it goes quite counter to the principles of its own reason and understanding, and subjects itself to the dominion of those passions and appetites which it ought to command; it chooses and refuses by the inclination of its affections, and not by the direction of its reason and conscience; which is the reason of that civil war there is between the law of its mind and the law of its members; that is, between its reason and conscience, and its corrupt lusts and inclinations; because while its will takes part against God, it sides with its lust against its reason; and whilst it doth so, it will be so far from being happy, that it will be continually at war with itself, and its will and its

conscience will be perpetually clashing with one another. For so long as a man goes against his reason, his reason must necessarily go against him, and be continually reproaching and upbraiding him, and vexing his mind with severe and angry reflections. And how can a man enjoy himself, whilst he is thus divided? Or how can he enjoy the happiness of a rational nature, whilst he is thus divided from his reason, and lives in perpetual variance with it? A body may as soon be at ease whilst its bones are out of joint, as a soul whilst its faculties are thus broken and divided. If ever we would be happy with our reason about us, we must be all of a piece with our reason; that is, our will must be rational, our affections must be rational, our actions must be rational: if they are not, our reason will be as much against them, as they are against it; and so there will be an everlasting broil and mutiny within us.

Till therefore we are throughout perfectly rational, that is, till all our faculties are entirely compliant to our reason, it is impossible we can ever be perfectly happy: and though we had power enough to defend ourselves from all hurtful impressions from without, and to ward off the blows, not only of devils and men, but even of God himself; yet so long as our reason and our will are at variance, our will will be a spiteful devil to us, and our reason an angry God. So that while we are imperfect, you see, we cannot be happy; and while we follow our own will against God, we cannot be perfect. For to follow *God and right reason*, saith the philosopher, *is the same thing*; and to *present ourselves*, saith a far greater author, *a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, is our reasonable service*,

Rom. xii. 1. For the will of God being invariably determined in all its choices and refusals by the infinite wisdom and goodness of his nature, must be the most perfectly rational will in the world, and as such, the standard and pattern of all other wills: and therefore, so far as our will doth deflect from his, it must necessarily be imperfect and irrational: but while I govern my will by his, and do choose and refuse by his commands and prohibitions, I follow the pattern of my perfection; and while I follow his will, which is a most perfect transcript of his nature, I transcribe his perfections into my own. For while I am copying his will, I am imitating his nature; and while I am imitating his nature, I am growing into his likeness and resemblance: and when once my will is all godlike, and its affections and inclinations are perfectly conformable to God's, then I am perfectly rational, and then shall be perfectly happy. For now, as I resemble God in his perfections, I shall resemble him in his self-enjoyment; my reason will be perfectly satisfied with my will, even as God's reason is with his; and my nature will be a fair and beautiful prospect to my understanding, even as God's nature is to his. I shall contemplate my own graces with a transcendent pleasure and delight; and while I alternately turn my eyes upon God and myself, and compare grace with grace, and beauty with beauty, I shall feel, as he doth, a heaven of content and joy springing up in my bosom. Thus by denying our own will, you see, and submitting to God's, which is the standard of our perfection, we naturally grow up into blessedness: whereas, by following our own wills, in opposition to God's, we fatally sink ourselves into wretchedness and misery.

3. It is also to be considered, that the conformity of our nature to our happiness consists not in what we will, but in what God wills. To make us blessed, it is not only necessary that there should be blissful objects for us to enjoy, but that our minds should agree with, and be contempered to them: for unless we are affected suitable to the worth and excellency of them, all the objects of heaven cannot make us happy. For as delicacies are grateful only to delicate palates, and music to musical ears, so the glorious entertainments of the world to come are a heaven only to heavenly minds: for to dwell with a God, whom I do not love, and to be confined to a society of spirits, whose tempers I am averse to; to be put upon exercises against which I have an antipathy, would be a tedious constraint, instead of a free enjoyment: so that before ever heaven can be a heaven to me, my mind must be tuned and adapted to its joys and beatitudes. And this is not to be effected by following our own will, but God's: for our will, as it stands in opposition to God's, is either a sensual or a devilish one, or both; and it is either covetousness or luxury, which are the lusts of the flesh, or pride or malice, which are the lusts of the spirit, that sway and determine it in all its choices and refusals; both which are as repugnant to the heavenly enjoyments, as light is to darkness, or one contrary to another. For between a spiritual heaven and a carnal mind, a divine heaven and a devilish mind, there is an irreconcileable distance; and for such a mind to live happily upon such a heaven, is as impossible in the nature of the thing, as it is for a hungry wolf to fill his belly with syllogisms, or to satisfy its appetite upon a lecture of

philosophy. Whilst therefore we give way to our corrupt will and inclination, we do contract an antipathy to heaven, and do what in us lies to prepossess our own minds with an implacable aversion to all its joys and beatitudes. We take an effectual course to antidote our souls against true happiness, and to secure our minds from being ever touched and affected with the divine and spiritual pleasures of the world to come. So that if we are still resolved to take part with our own wicked will against God, we were best take our pleasure while we may have it, while we live among these sensitive enjoyments, that suit with our brutish appetites and affections: for when we go hence into the spiritual world, that will be like a barren wilderness to us, where we shall find nothing to live upon, but be forced to pine away a long eternity under a desperate hunger and dissatisfaction. But if we heartily resign up ourselves to God, and prostrate our wills to his, we shall thereby quickly acquire a heavenly frame and disposition. For the proper business of all those duties he requires at our hands, is to dress and prepare our souls for heaven, and make us *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.* It is by these that he carves and polishes our natures, cuts off the roughnesses and unevennesses of our temper, and squares us into fit materials for the heavenly building: *For this is the will of God,* saith the apostle, *even our sanctification,* 1 Thess. iv. 3. that is, the purging our nature from all its aversion and repugnancy to the blessedness of heaven, and the inlaying it with all those divine dispositions wherein our conformity with heaven consists: for so our Saviour explains it, John xii. 50. *I know that his command-*

ment to life everlasting; that is, that what he commands is the seed and principle of everlasting blessedness; that it is the charity and humility, the righteousness and temperance, and self-resignation, which he commands, which do attemper our minds to the heavenly state, and by which we are to relish the joys and pleasures of it for ever. For it is these virtues that do reconcile our appetites to heaven; and without these, our souls can no more relish the joys of it, than our palate can sweatmeats while it is overflowed with gall. Unless therefore we will deny our corrupt will and affections, and submit ourselves to God, it is nonsense for us to talk of going to heaven: for heaven itself, without a heavenly disposition to relish it, is a tasteless and insipid thing; and it is as possible to please a blind man with the beauty of colours, and a deaf man with a consort of music, as to gratify a vicious mind with its divine and spiritual enjoyments.

4. And lastly, It is to be considered, that the essential acts and ingredients of our happiness are not what we will, but what God wills. It is a great mistake, to imagine that the happiness of man consists in external possessions, or in being seized of a great plenty of outward goods, of any kind whatsoever, whether they be earthly or heavenly. It is not possessing the outward goods of this world, but the enjoying them, that makes any man happy: and if I had all the world in my possession, no more of it could go into my happiness, than just what I enjoy; all the rest would be like the possession of a great mountain of sand, which I could neither eat, nor drink, nor apply to any of my needs or conveniencies: so that the possession of outward goods is good only as it is in

order to their enjoyment of them; abstracted from which, it is altogether indifferent whether I am possessed of them or no. But now it is by our own actions that we do enjoy the goods we are possessed of, by applying them to the needs and conveniencies of our nature, and by the content and satisfaction we take in the application. So that in short our happiness is not in the goods that are without us, but in the enjoyment of them that is within us; that is, in those acts of fruition by which we feel and perceive them. And thus, if we were possessed of all those outward goods that heaven abounds with, they could signify nothing to our happiness, unless we had an inward enjoyment of them; and by proper acts of fruition did taste and perceive their beauty and delightfulness. So that all the happiness, you see, that heaven on earth can afford us, is immediately lodged in our own acts of enjoyment; without which, neither the possession of wealth and honour upon earth, nor of the presence of God, and saints, and angels in heaven, can make us in the least degree happy. Since therefore our happiness is so immediately lodged in our own acts, it will hence necessarily follow, that those acts by which the goods of heaven are to be enjoyed are the acts of our future happiness. Now the chiefest goods of heaven being God, and saints, and angels, and ourselves; the chiefest happiness of heaven must consist in those acts by which God, and saints, and angels, and ourselves are enjoyed: and by what acts can these be enjoyed, but by godly, saintly, and angelical ones? It is by worship and contemplation, by love and imitation, by dependence and subjection, that God is to be enjoyed by us; it is by charity and righteousness, by modesty and peaceable-

ness, by submission and condescension, that saints and angels are to be enjoyed by us; it is by prudence and moderation, by fortitude, temperance, and humility, that we ourselves are to be enjoyed by us; and therefore if, when we go into eternity, we carry with us a mind and will habituated to these beatific actions, these acts are the sum and substance of God's will and law. Whilst therefore we take part with our own will against God's, we act quite counter to our own happiness, and go contrary to all the acts of our heavenly fruition and enjoyment. For that which God designs in all his commands is to educate and train up our nature for heaven, to discipline and exercise it in the beatifical acts of the heavenly life; that so, when it is advanced from this school of probation to the university of happiness, it may be instructed in the language, and naturalized to the exercise of it; that it may be predisposed and habituated to love and dependence, to charity and righteousness, and all those beatifical acts by which heaven is enjoyed, so that while we follow his will, we are learning to enjoy heaven, and perfecting ourselves in the acts of our everlasting fruition; that so, when we go from hence to take possession of the goods above, we may be perfectly versed in the enjoyment of them, and have the skill and ability to make a happy use of them for ever. Whereas on the contrary, while we follow our own corrupt will and inclinations, we do not only not learn these blessed acts of fruition, but we learn the quite contraries. Instead of learning to enjoy God by love and adoration, we learn how to divide ourselves eternally from him, by contracting enmity to him, and a profane contempt of his majesty. Instead of learning to enjoy

saints and angels by charity and righteousness, we learn how to banish ourselves from their society, by contracting malicious and dishonest inclinations: in a word, instead of learning to enjoy ourselves by humility and temperance, we learn how to be our own devils and tormentors, by contracting pride and an unlimited propension to bodily pleasures; by which means we shall at last render our nature not only impotent, but also irreconcileable to all those blessed acts of our future happiness, and so utterly disable ourselves from enjoying heaven, that it would be a real grievance to us to be forced to endure it. For when, by thus following my own wicked will, I have contracted a deep and inveterate aversion to all those beatifical acts by which heaven is enjoyed, I have an antipathy against heaven in my nature; and so long as this continues, heaven must be a torment to me, instead of a fruition: and if when I go from hence into eternity, I should be admitted into heaven, with this prevailing aversion to the beatifical acts of it; I should be so far from enjoying it, that I should loathe it, and rather choose to banish myself from it for ever, than to be confined to a condition so unsuitable to my nature. Whilst therefore I am running from God, after my own will, I am running from heaven; and if I do not stop, the sooner shall run myself to a distance from it, as immense and irreconcileable as that which separated Dives from Abraham's bosom.

And thus you see how indispensably necessary, upon all these accounts, self-denial is, in order to our future happiness. Hence then, let us all be persuaded to renounce our corrupt will and affections, and resign up ourselves to the government of God!

and further, to move you hereunto, I beseech you briefly to consider with me these four things:

1. That in itself this is the most just and equitable thing you can do.

2. That in this consists the life and substance of all your religion.

3. That this is the great hinge upon which your safety and security depends.

4. That in this you do the most effectually consult your own interest.

1. That to deny your own wills, and resign up yourselves to the government of God, is in itself the most just and equitable thing you can do. For all your powers and faculties are God's by an unalienable right and property; your understanding is his, and your will is his, and all your powers of action are the births and products of his fruitful will and almighty goodness. And if it be thus, we must necessarily be obliged to subject ourselves to him, and prostrate our wills and all the powers of action at his feet. If then we are his, as we must be, if we are made by him, what have we to do to dispose of ourselves contrary to his will and pleasure? With what colour of justice can I choose what he commands me to refuse, when my power of choosing is his, and he hath a far more undoubted right to it, than I have to the clothes on my back? When he is the supreme proprietor of that will wherewith I choose, with what conscience can I vote with it against him, or give away any of my choices and elections from him? What is this, but to embezzle my master's goods, and alienate his property from his use and service? Remember, O man! in every

wicked choice that thou makest, thou givest away thyself from thy right owner, and dost sacrilegiously rob God of the fruits of his own creation, and must one day expect to render a dreadful account to him for every choice thou hast given away from him, and for every thought, and word, and action which thou hast presumed to dispose of contrary to his orders: for thou hast no more right to give away thyself, or any of thy choices and actions, from God, and canst no more justify thyself for so doing, than thou hast to sell away thy landlord's fee-simple, or to entail his inheritance on thy children. And before you make too bold with God's property, or presume to dispose of his goods at your pleasure, you were best consider seriously whom you have to deal with; that you have not to do with a being that is to be hectored out of his rights, or borne down with might and violence; but with a God that is sufficiently sensible of your unjust usurpations, and abundantly able to revenge them; that is jealous of his own rights and properties, has a deep resentment of all your injurious invasions of them, and an almighty arm to assert and vindicate them. And when you have considered this, then alienate your choices from him, if you dare; but in the mean time, as you will answer the injustice of it at the tribunal of God, have a care how you dispose of yourselves contrary to his orders; lest, as a just retribution, he should one day dispose of you contrary to your will, to everlasting misery and despair.

2. Consider that in this denying and resigning ourselves to God consists the life and substance of all our religion. For what is religion, but a religation, a tying or binding fast men's minds and wills to

God? It is the bond of our allegiance to the throne of heaven, by which we oblige ourselves to be God's subjects, and resign up our wills and all our powers of action to his government: and in this, as I shewed you, consists self-denial. For when once we have mastered our own self-will, and conquered its obstinacy, and persuaded it to yield up itself to the will of God, then is his glorious empire set up in our souls; then he is crowned our sovereign Lord, his kingdom is come into us, and we may cry, *Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.* But till once our religion hath tied our souls to God, and obliged our will to renounce all other lords, and submit to his empire, it is only a name, an empty show and formality of religion; it is a religion without a religion, or a bond without a tie; that is, it is downright nonsense, and a contradiction to itself. And what shows or professions soever we may make of religion, how zealous or forward soever we may be in the external acts of it, it will all signify nothing to us, unless there be a prostrate will and a resigned heart at the bottom. For this is the alpha and omega, the corner and the top stone of religion; and to pretend religion without this, is to pretend loyalty in open acts of rebellion. And indeed, could religion consist with a rebellious will, the Devil himself might very fairly pretend to it: for that which makes him a devil is nothing but his own boisterous self-will, that is continually struggling and lifting up itself against God. And hence Belial is the Devil's name, which signifies *without yoke:* and accordingly, the children of Belial are described to be such *as do altogether break the yoke, and burst the bonds of the Lord,* Jer. v. 5. and called *children of disobedience,* Eph. ii. 2. be-

cause, like their father Belial, they are impatient of restraint, and will hearken to no law, but that of their own boundless self-will.

So far are those men from being truly religious, whose wills are divided from God's, that they are in Belial's predicament, unyoked from the divine government, and their wills are in a strict confederacy with the Devil. And hence the prophet Samuel, speaking of Saul's rebellion against God, tells him, that *rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft*, 1 Sam. xv. 23. that is, rebellion against God is an implicit confederacy with the Devil, even as witchcraft is an implicit one. For the Devil being the prince and ringleader of the rebel creation, whoever sets up his will against God does thereby renounce his allegiance to heaven, and, like a false recreant, joins hands with the Devil in rebellion against his Maker. And whilst a man's soul doth thus clasp wills with the Devil, and conspires with him in his rebellion against heaven, what impudent hypocrisy is it for him to pretend to religion? Wherefore, either let us be so modest for the future, as not to pretend to religion, or any of those blessed hopes it sets before us; or let us resolve to be so honest to our pretensions, as to deny ourselves, and resign up our wills to God. For while our will and God's are divided and separated, and do in any instance tread antipodes to each other, all our pretence of religion is a shameless cheat; which, when it comes to be examined at the tribunal of God, will be found a mere paint and artificial complexion daubed upon a black and devilish nature.

3. Consider, that upon our denying ourselves, and resigning our wills to God, depends all our safety and security. For if God be against us, all the powers

of heaven and earth cannot secure us; because his will hath an infinite power conjoined with it, that, like an irresistible torrent, bears down all oppositions, and sweeps every thing before it that stands in its way. To what purpose then should such impotent things as we set up our wills against his? Can you ever hope to prevail against him, or to force his almighty will into a compliance with yours? Gird up yourselves, like men, and I will demand of you in the name of God, Have you an arm like God, or can you thunder with a voice like him? Are ye able to withstand the whirlwind of his power, or to shelter your heads against the storms of his vengeance? Alas! no; a feather in the air may sooner stop a thunderbolt that comes roaring down from the clouds, than you can the course of that almighty will, which doth whatsoever it pleases both in heaven and earth: and if so, with what safety can you oppose your impotent will to it, or how can you expect to prosper in such an unequal contention? Since therefore God doth so infinitely outmatch you, and it is infallibly certain that first or last he will be too hard for you, all that is left to your choice is, whether you will do his will, or suffer it; whether you will obey his commands, or endure his inflictions: for one of these you must do; but which of the two, is left to your own election. If you think it more eligible to obey what God hath enjoined, than to endure what he will inflict, you may, by choosing the former, eternally secure yourselves from the latter; for, besides that such is the generous goodness of God's nature, as it will not permit him to trample upon the prostrate, nor to deny fair quarter to such as lay down their arms, and freely surrender themselves to his

will and disposal; besides this, I say, upon the satisfaction which his own Son hath made for the sins of the world, he hath obliged himself, by a public grant and promise of mercy, to receive us into his favour and protection, upon our unfeigned submission to him, and to treat us graciously, notwithstanding all our past rebellions, as if we had been for ever perfectly loyal to him, and had neither in thought, nor word, nor deed, offended him. So that now, if we will heartily submit our wills to him, he cannot let loose his power on us, without forfeiting his truth, and doing violence to the perfections of his own nature. But, notwithstanding all the goodness of his own nature, and all the virtue of that propitiation that he hath made for our sins, this is a law which he will never dispense with: "I will see that my creatures shall obey me, or feel me, that they shall conform to my will, or sink under my vengeance; and if they will be so desperate as to refuse the former, all the powers of heaven and earth shall not secure them from the latter." If therefore you are so abandoned of all reason, as to think it more eligible to suffer the will of God than to obey it, you must even take what follows: for, as sure as God is in heaven and you upon earth, you shall one day feel the weight of his arm, if you do not freely surrender yourselves to his will and disposal. But before you do so, for your soul's sake, consider once more what a terrible election you are making; that it is the unquenchable wrath of the everliving God that you are throwing yourselves upon, a wrath that will imprint itself upon every faculty of your nature, and be dropping like burning sulphur upon your souls for ever. And if, after you have considered this,

you will still adhere to your desperate option, *the Lord have mercy upon your souls!*

4. And lastly, Consider, that if there were no obligation to this duty, or no danger in the contrary, yet in thus denying ourselves, and resigning our wills to God, we do the most effectually consult our own interest. For God, being infinitely happy in his own perfections, and deriving all possible satisfaction from his own self-sufficiency, cannot be supposed to desire any thing for himself without himself; and being perfectly exempted from all want and indigence, by the infinite fulness of his being, he can have nothing of envy or malice in his nature; which are weak and impotent passions, that do always spring out of a sense of need and insufficiency, and are utterly inconsistent with a state of perfect fulness and beatitude. Since therefore in his outward administrations he can have no self-ends to serve upon his creatures, and since he can have no principle of envy or malice towards them in his nature, it hence necessarily follows, that in ruling and governing them he can have no other design upon them, but to do them good, and make them like himself, i. e. perfectly happy. So that God's end and ours is always the same; we would be happy, and God would have us so too, and ourselves cannot aim at our happiness more heartily and sincerely than he does; all the difference therefore between him and us is about the means and way to our happiness: we are for one way, and he is for another; we think the way to our happiness is *to live in all ungodliness and worldly lusts*; and he thinks the way to it is *to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* So that the whole dispute between God and us, so far

as reason is concerned in it, depends upon this, whether God be in the right, or ourselves; whether we are not deceived in choosing this way, or God be not deceived in prescribing the contrary. If we have any reason to think that we are wiser than God, or do better understand the way to our own happiness; then it must be acknowledged, that in refusing God's way, and choosing our own, we do advisedly consult our own interest: but this is such a supposal, as, I believe, never entered into any man's sober thoughts. And if we have all the reason in the world to conclude, not only that God is wiser than we, but that, whereas we are extremely short-sighted, and apt to be imposed upon with glistering shows and appearances, he hath such a full comprehension of all things, as that he cannot be deceived; then we may be sure, that when we forsake our own way, and follow God's, we cannot be misled, but at every step must be tending directly to our own happiness. For if God cannot be deceived, and we may, it is certain, that whenever our way to happiness lies contrary to his, he is in the right, and we are in the wrong; and consequently, that when we forsake his way, to follow our own, we go from happiness to misery.

Is it likely that we should know what belongs to human nature, and the ordering and regulating its affections and actions? that we should understand the just bounds and measures where it is to be restrained, and where indulged, better than the God that formed and composed it? And if it be not, as doubtless it is not, were we not much better resign our wills to his government, than to live at our own disposal? For he desires to govern us for no other

reason, but because he knows he can govern us much better than ourselves? He sees that we are a sort of blind and precipitant creatures, that must unavoidably stumble into eternal ruin, if we follow our own wills; and therefore he would fain retrieve us out of our own hands, that so, having the sole disposal of us himself, he may conduct us safely to happiness. And when he intends as kindly to us as we can to ourselves, were we not better follow his wisdom than our own folly? He knows that our self-love will in the effect prove self-hatred to us, if it be not moderated and directed by a better and wiser love: and therefore he would have it under the direction of his, which is the best and wisest love in the world. He desires to have the government of our will upon no other account, but only that he might determine all its choices to our happiness; and requires our hearts of us merely for this end, that he might fill them with peace and rest. He knows that our perfection and happiness lies in compliance with our duty, in piety and justice, mercy and humility; and that out of the free and constant, sprightly and vivacious exercise of those virtues, arises all our heaven, both here and hereafter: and knowing this, that tender love he bears us, that mighty concern he hath for our welfare, makes him thus urgent and importunate with us in his demands of our duty: for he regards our duty no farther than it tends to our good; and values each act of our obedience by what it contributes to our happiness. He affects not to burden us with unnecessary impositions: all that he requires of us is what our interest requires; which is so dear and precious to him, that he will dispense with nothing that is necessary to promote and secure it; and it is

therefore he will not dispense with us, because he cannot, without releasing us from our obligation to be happy. Why then should we desire (O foolish creatures that we are!) to be released from the yoke of his government? or how can we count it liberty to be loosed from an infinite goodness, that is conducted by infinite wisdom and power? For whatsoever my blind lusts and passions may dictate, my reason assures me, that the greatest privilege that belongs to a creature is to be under the government of God; and that if he should release me from my subjection to his will, by a dispensation under the broad seal of heaven, and give me an unlimited licence to live as I list, promising never to be displeased with me more, or to take any farther cognizance of my actions, the best and wisest thing I could do for myself would be to resign back myself to his government, and surrender up my blind and precipitant will to his most wise and gracious disposal. And if he should refuse to re-admit me to his government, and abandon me for ever to my own self-will, I should be the most forlorn soul on this side hell: I should not know what to do, nor which way to turn myself; but be forced to wander in a dark wilderness, without being ever able to discover any certain pathway to my happiness. But so long as I am under the government of God, I am sure I am safe; and while I follow his all-wise and most gracious will, I know that I am going to a happy end; and that how rough soever my way is, it will bring me to Canaan. What then remains, but that from henceforth we utterly deny ourselves, renounce our corrupt wills and inclinations, and cheerfully re-

sign ourselves to the will of God; which hath no other design upon us, but to do us good, to raise and advance our degenerate natures, and conduct us through the kingdom of grace into the kingdom of glory.

DISCOURSE VIII.

UPON

1 JOHN III. 7.

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

THESE words are a short and plain resolution of that grand case, viz. how a man may know whether he be in a state of grace and favour with God; or, which is all one, whether he be a good man and a good Christian. The Gnosticks, against whom St. John particularly directs this Epistle, placed all righteousness and goodness in certain pretended illuminations, which had nothing in them but certain swelling words of vanity, and, like gilded bubbles, were blown up with wind, and filled with mystical nonsense. And though in their lives and manners they were a reproach and scandal, not only to religion, but even to human nature; yet merely on the account of these their own wild dreams, they vaunted themselves to be the only elect and favourites of God; and imagined themselves advanced to that degree of perfection, as that they were above all law, and freely dispensed with under the broad seal of heaven to live as they listed, and to wallow in riot and voluptuousness. Against these wild men the apostle here seems to forewarn his little children: Suffer not these vile deceivers to impose upon your faith this their damnable error, viz. that by receiving their highflown mysteries and pretended revelations you shall, without any more ado, be constituted per-

fect and righteous men in the sight of God: for from God himself I do assure you, that he, and he only, *that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous*, i. e. as Christ is righteous, of whom I just before discoursed.

In the prosecution of which argument, I shall endeavour these two things:

I. To shew you what it is to do righteousness in general.

II. What that righteous doing is, which in the sense of Christianity constitutes us righteous men.

I. What it is to do righteousness in general. I answer, it is to give to every one his due; or to perform to God, ourselves, and to all the world, whatsoever is owing from the state of our nature, and the relations and circumstances wherein we are placed. And in this latitude, to do righteousness is the sum of religion and the whole duty of man. The righteous man therefore, or the man that doth righteousness, is, in the sense of the text, one that demeans himself so, as in the judgment of right reason he ought to do, towards God, himself, and all the world: that, looking upon himself under the relation of God's creature and pensioner, doth freely render him all that homage, and reverence, and love, and gratitude, and trust, and adoration, that are owing to so great a Creator and so liberal a Benefactor; one that, considering the frame of his own nature, how he is compounded of contrary principles, viz. spirit and flesh, reason and sense, exercises himself in all those human virtues which consist in the dominion of his superior principles of reason over his sensitive passions and appetites; such as patience and equanimity, courage and meekness, temperance and

chastity: all which are proper to us, as beings made up of contrary principles, from whence spring those contrary appetites and inclinations in us, in the good or bad government whereof, the essence of human virtue and vice consists. In a word, the righteous man is one who, considering his state, and circumstances, and relations in the world, behaves himself in them all as right reason directs and obliges him; that, as he is a member of human society, bears an hearty good-will to the whole corporation of mankind; that is courteous and affable, peaceable and condescending, longsuffering and ready to forgive; that is grateful to those from whom he hath received good, and, so far as he hath opportunity, is ready to do good to others; that is faithful to his promises, sincere in his professions, just and honest in his dealings; that heartily wishes every man were good, and without manifest reason to the contrary, believes every one to be so; that when he sees a fault, is ready to excuse it, and where he cannot, silently bewails and laments it; that as a subject, is loyal and obedient to his superiors; and as a superior, is careful of the public good, and just and benign towards all his inferiors; that as a father, loves his children, piously and wisely educates them, and is provident for their happiness both here and hereafter; that as a child, reverences his parents, and is ready to comfort and assist them in their needs, and in all lawful things to render them a cheerful obedience; that as a husband, is kind to his wife, compassionate to her infirmities, and easy to be entreated by her; that as a wife, is modest in her behaviour, careful and vigilant in her family, and soft and tractable to the will of her hus-

wisdom of a man. In this state of things therefore, if God will not allow the lowest degree of our perfection to be good, neither can he the highest: for our improvement being gradual, there must of necessity be a first degree before there can be a second; and therefore, if God allows not the first, he must for the same reason disallow the second of the same kind, and so on from the third to the highest degree of all. Seeing therefore Christianity is a religion for men, it must be supposed to be fitted to their low and imperfect condition; which it could not be, if it did not abate for our defects, and admit us to be righteous in the main, even while we are imperfectly so; and that it doth so, is apparent by the distinction it frequently makes between the less and the more perfect, still allowing both to be righteous. Thus it distinguishes between babes and men, allowing both to be in Christ; between the weak, and the strong and confirmed, allowing both to be in the faith: and our Saviour himself, speaking of some who, upon receiving the seed of the gospel, brought forth sixty, and others a hundredfold, doth yet allow them all to be good ground, Matt. xiii.; and Luke xix. 19. he as well allows him to be a *good and faithful servant* who had improved his talent into five, as he who had improved his into ten. From all which it is evident, that the gospel doth not judge of our main state by the degrees, but by the reality of our righteousness.

2. It is to be premised, that that which constitutes us righteous men in the judgment of the gospel, is some internal, vital principle of righteousness. For as all other things receive their denomination from their forms, so it is from some internal form of

righteousness that righteous men receive their denomination. It is not the simple doing righteous actions that constitutes a man righteous: for he may be a very bad man, not only while he doth that which is righteous, but also in the very doing of it. Thus a man may fast and pray, only to gloss his oppressions; he may do an honest action, to disguise a knavish design; in which case he sins in the doing of it, because in the doing it he profanes religion, by making it a cloak for his wickedness: a plain evidence, that actions which in themselves are materially good do partake of the principles from whence they do proceed, and receive their forms and denominations from them; seeing even good actions may be infected by a bad principle, and derive into themselves the malignity and baseness of the fountains from whence they flow. And if without a righteous principle our actions cannot be righteous, to be sure neither can we, because we are as our actions are. Hence you may observe in the New Testament, that good men are generally denominated from the internal form of goodness; they are said to be *born of God*, and to have the *seed of God remaining in them*, 1 John iii. 9. and to be *renewed in the spirit of their mind*, Ephes. iv. 23. to be *spiritually minded*, Rom. viii. 6. and to be *transformed by the renewing of their mind*, Rom. xii. 2. and to be *partakers of the divine nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4. All which do plainly denote, that to constitute us righteous men in the sense of the gospel, there is necessarily required some internal form and principle of righteousness.

2. And lastly, We must premise, that Christianity being the law, or rule of our religion, the in-

ternal principle, which in the sense of this law constitutes us righteous, must be strictly religious; that is, it must be such as doth immediately respect God, who is the great object of all religion. For religion, in the strictest sense, is the rule of divine worship; and under this notion of divine worship, or homage, and obedience to God, Christianity exacts every duty of us: for it requires us to *do all as unto God*, and to *do all to the glory of God*, i. e. in obedience to him, and out of a sincere acknowledgment of his authority over us, and immutable right to rule and command us: and even those moral virtues which do immediately respect our neighbours and ourselves, are enjoined as duties unto God, and bound upon us with religious obligations. So that now, all the acts and functions of a good life are adopted into the rubrick of Christian worship, and required of us as acts of obedience to God: from whence it follows, that the spring and principle of those acts must be strictly religious, immediately respecting God and his authority over us; it being impossible those acts should be truly religious which do not proceed from a religious principle.

These things being premised, I come now to lay down what that principle is, which in the sense of Christian religion constitutes us righteous men. In general, it is a considerate, universal, prevailing resolution to obey God, proceeding from our belief of the Christian religion. For the better understanding of which, I shall briefly explain the particular terms of it.

1. I say, it is a resolution.
2. It is a resolution of obeying God.
3. It is a considerate resolution.

4. An universal, and

5. A prevalent one.

6. A resolution of obeying God, springing out of our belief of the Christian religion.

1. It is a resolution; by which I exclude the habit of obedience from being the prime and constituitive principle of Christian righteousness. For Christianity, as was shewn before, supposing great imperfections and infirmities, even in those whom it allows to be righteous in the main; if we would judge rightly of our own state by the Christian rule, we must take measure of ourselves from that which is the lowest and most imperfect principle of righteousness, and not conclude ourselves to be unrighteous, because we are not righteous to such a degree: but as for the habit of obedience, which consists in an inherent promptness, faculty, and easiness to obey, it is so perfect a principle, as is not attainable but under a long progress in religion. For when after a vicious course of life we begin to reform, we are so far from being habituated to obey God, that we obey him with difficulty and strong reluctancy, and are fain to row against the stream of our own inclination: in which state we are far from having attained to an habit or promptness of obeying. So that by making this the constituitive principle of Christian righteousness, we exclude from the state of righteousness all beginners in religion; and do allow none to be faithful servants, but those who have conquered the difficulties of obeying. The true form or principle therefore, from which we receive the denomination of righteous men, is that point or term from which we begin to be righteous, and that is, a righteous resolution. For choice and resolution is the spring of all voluntary

form and settle a new one. And if before this is done men enter upon new resolutions, they must resolve without considering either the matters they resolve on, or the motives which should support their resolution: insomuch that when they come to practise what they thus hastily resolved, either they find more difficulty in the matter than they were aware of, or want sufficient motives to carry them through it; by reason of which, their resolution flags in the execution, and many times yields to the next temptation that encounters them. To the forming therefore of a holding resolution, such as will prove a living principle of righteousness, great care must be taken to found it on a thorough consideration, both of the particulars we resolve upon, together with their appendant difficulties; and of the motives and arguments with which Christianity backs and enforces it. First, we must set before our eyes the sins we must part with, and the duties we must submit to, and fairly represent to ourselves the many difficulties and temptations that are like to attend us in both; and having thus placed ourselves in the midst of the difficulties of a religious life, and so far as in us lies rendered them actual and present to us, we must never cease pressing our stubborn wills with the arguments and motives of religion, till we have obtained of them an explicit consent to every duty that calls for our resolution. And when we have thus weighed all particulars over and over, in the balance of an impartial consideration, and implored the divine assistance, (without which our strongest resolution will certainly fail, and which is never wanting to any, but those who are wanting to themselves,) let us then resolve, and seal our resolution

with solemn vows and promises to God. For thus our blessed Saviour, when he saw the multitude forward to follow him, fairly proposes to their consideration the difficulties they must engage in, if they would be his disciples; that so their resolving in too much haste might not give them occasion to repent at leisure; as you may see at large, Luke xiv. 26—33. And elsewhere he compares rash and inconsiderate resolvers to a man that goes about to build a tower without ever considering what it will cost, or whether he hath money sufficient to finish it, and so when he hath laid the foundation, gives it over, and renders himself ridiculous. And the same he compares also to a king that goes to war without ever considering whether he hath force enough to encounter his enemy, and so rushing headlong into the battle, is either forced to retreat, or yield to the mercy of the conqueror. And in the parable of the prodigal, Luke xv. wherein he purposely describes the whole progress of the soul towards God, the first thing the prodigal did, after he came to himself, was to consider what an happy change he should make in his condition by returning to his father; *How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger!* and having well considered this, he at length resolves, *I will arise, and go to my father.* Thus also the prophet David introduces his resolution of amendment through a deep and serious consideration of his ways; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies,* Psalm cxix. 59.

4. It must be an universal resolution of obeying God; such as indifferently extends to all the instances of our duty; otherwise it can be no entire

principle of righteousness; because, though it may reform us in some instances, it must leave us unreformed in others, and so can only render us less wicked, but never entirely good. For seeing the Christian law exacts of us universal obedience, and doth not oblige us in one instance more than another, it is impossible that any resolution should be the principle of that righteousness it requires, but that which respects the whole: *If we keep the whole law*, saith St. James, *and yet offend in one point, we are guilty of all.* For which he subjoins this reason, *He that hath said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill*, James ii. 10, 11. i. e. It is the same authority that forbids the one as well as the other: and therefore, though thou dost not the one, yet if thou dost the other, thou sinnest against the authority of both. Seeing therefore we are not accounted universally righteous by the law of Christ, unless we do universally obey it, a partial resolution to obey can never constitute us righteous, because such a resolution will never make us universally obedient. *Then shall I not be ashamed*, saith David, *when I have respect to all thy commandments*, Psalm cxix. 6. So that to make our resolution a Christian principle of righteousness, it is necessary that it should be universal, i. e. of equal extent with that law which is the measure of our righteousness; that, like a fruitful womb, it should be pregnant with every good work, and virtually contain in it every particular that our religion hath made our duty.

5. It must be a prevailing resolution; a resolution of such force as doth engage us to do what we resolve, and actually prevails over all temptations to

the contrary. For all the virtue of a good resolution consists in its relation to action; because if that we resolve to do be not necessary, it is indifferent whether we resolve to do it or no: but if it be, it must be done, otherwise we had been as good never to have resolved to do it.

The goodness of our resolution therefore consists in this, that it is an engagement to practise what we resolve; and consequently, if our resolution to obey God be not prevalent enough to engage us to obey him, it is so far from being a true principle of Christian righteousness, that it is a mere insignificant cipher. For as that can be no cause which produces no effect, so that can be no principle of righteousness which is not productive of it: and if to make it a principle of righteousness, it is necessary that it should be a prevalent engagement to a righteous life, then it follows, that when it ceases to be prevalent, it ceases to be a principle of righteousness; and consequently, that whenever we do commit any sin that is inconsistent with a prevailing resolution to obey God, we do for that time cease to be righteous men.

But there are no sins inconsistent with the prevailing resolution to obey God, but such as do prevail against it, and actually overpower it: and therefore, as for those weaknesses, surreptions, and surprises, which, for distinction sake, we call sins of infirmity; either we do not consent to them, and consequently they are so far from overpowering our good resolution, that they do not at all contest with it; or if we do consent to them, it is unawares, before we can oppose our resolution against them. So that though upon surprise they do win our consent,

yet they do not win it from our good resolution, which in this sudden hurry of thoughts had not time to canvass for it, but had power enough to have obtained it, had it had but opportunity to prefer its claim: and therefore as for such sins as these, they may fairly comport with the prevailing resolution of obedience. But then there are sins of wilfulness, which proceed either from wilful habits or from deliberate choice; and these are no more consistent with such a resolution, than one contrary is with another in the same degree. For he who sins wilfully is prevalently resolved to sin; and to be so, and at the same time prevalently resolved to obey God, is a contradiction in terms. Whilst therefore sin hath the prevalence in us, we are so long servants of sin, and do so long cease to be servants of righteousness. It is true, there are degrees of wickedness, and the longer a man continues wicked, the worse he will be; but still he is a wicked man who is more prevalently resolved to sin than to obey God; and he who is so, though but for an hour or a day, is so long wicked, as well as he who continues so for a month or a year: he is not wicked indeed to so high a degree, and so may far more easily recover; but from the time that we deliberately consent to any known sin, to the time that we repent of it, we are wilful sinners. If we repent immediately, we immediately recover into that good estate from whence we were fallen, and so our wound is cured almost as soon as it is made. For the proper repentance of single acts of wilful sin, is either to resolve not to repeat them, or, where it can be done, to undo them again by restitution. But when our baffled resolution to obey God is thus recovered

into a prevalent engagement to obey him, it revives into a living principle of righteousness; but yet before we can reasonably conclude it is such, we must make some trial of it: for as it is certain, that until it be prevalent, it is not a true principle of righteousness, so it is certain, that till for some time it hath actually prevailed, we cannot be secure that it is prevalent. That is not to be called a prevalent resolution, that for a day or a week puts us into a fit of religion, and so expires: such flashy purposes are so far from being thorough cures, that they are only so many intermissions of our disease, that always leave us as bad or worse than they found us. But if upon sufficient trial we find that our resolution doth hold against all temptations, and actually engage us to our duty, in despite of all solicitations to the contrary, we may then safely conclude that it is that very vital principle, which, in the judgment of our holy religion, doth constitute us righteous men. And accordingly, Matthew xxi. 28, 29, 30, our Saviour compares those who might, but did not enter into the kingdom of heaven, to a son that first resolved to go whither his father commanded him, but afterwards cooled, and did not obey; implying that the great fault which spoiled his resolution, and rendered it insignificant, was this, that it was not firm and prevalent; which had it been, it had actually entered him in the kingdom of heaven.

6. And lastly, It must be a resolution to obey God springing out of our belief of the Christian religion; and this it is which renders it strictly and properly a Christian principle of righteousness. It is true indeed, if either we never heard of Christianity, or it had never been proposed to us with sufficient motives

of credibility, our infidelity would have been only our misery, but not our crime: and if, upon a thorough consideration of the arguments of natural religion, and of the good and evil which naturally springs out of good and evil actions, we were effectually resolved to study the will of God, and, so far as we understood it, to obey it; it had been no criminal defect in our resolution, not to be founded upon our belief of Christianity; because to believe without sufficient reason is so far from being our duty, that it is our defect, and an argument of our weakness and foolish credulity. But now that Christianity has been made known, and sufficiently proposed to us, we cannot be good men unless we do believe it; and if we do believe it, we cannot be good Christians, if we do not thereupon effectually resolve to obey it. In short therefore, they who have not the gospel are obliged to obey God upon the motives of natural religion, which is all that can reasonably be expected from them: but as for us who have the gospel, wherein, together with the arguments of our nature, God hath fairly proposed to us the higher motives of Christianity, we are bound to believe these as well as those; and upon this belief to proceed to a firm resolution of obedience; which if we do, our resolution is strictly Christian, in contradistinction to theirs who have not the gospel, and so resolve only upon principles of natural reason: not but that their resolution is for substance the same with ours, only ours is founded upon greater and more prevalent motives. The duties of Christianity are the same with those of natural religion; and excepting those three positive precepts, of baptism, and the Lord's supper, and of worship-

ping God in and through Christ, there is no command in the gospel distinct from the eternal rules of morality, which the gospel doth improve upon new principles, and strengthen with more powerful obligations.

And thus I have explained to you what is that vital form and principle, which, in the sense of the law of Christ, doth constitute us righteous men. In short, he is a righteous man, in the true Christian sense, who, upon a thorough consideration of the arguments and motives of Christianity, is universally and prevalently resolved to obey its laws. To conclude all therefore, from hence I infer,

1. What is the true safe way for a man to resolve his own conscience concerning the main state of his soul, whether in the gospel-sense he be righteous or no. I know it is a common doctrine with some men, that the resolution of this great case depends upon an inward whisper, suggestion, or testimony of the Spirit of God, which, I fear, hath fatally deluded too many men into a groundless confidence and assurance. For when all of a sudden they feel themselves surprised with joyous and comfortable thoughts, they presently conclude it to be an inward whisper and testimony of the Spirit of God; when many times there is nothing in it, but an unaccountable frisk of melancholy vapours, heated and fermented by a feverish humour; and many of these sudden joys and dejections, which these men interpret to be the incomes and withdrawings of the Spirit of God, do apparently proceed from no other cause than the shiverings and burnings of an ague: upon which account hysterical fits are frequently mistaken for spiritual exercises. And when men have most confi-

dently believed themselves overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, their fancies have been only hagged and ridden by the enthusiastic vapours of their own spleen. And sometimes, I make no doubt, but this sudden flush of joyous thoughts proceeds from a worse principle, even from the suggestion of the Devil; who, though he hath no immediate access to the minds of men, can doubtless act upon their spirits and humours, and thereby figure their fancies with sprightly ideas, and tickle their hearts into a rapture; and this power of his we may reasonably suppose he is ready enough to exert upon any mischievous occasion, whenever he finds a man willing to be deceived, and to rely upon ungrounded presumptions. The true and only safe way, therefore, for a man to resolve himself, is impartially to survey himself, and to consider whether in the main his intentions and actions are righteous. If you ask, By what signs and tokens shall a man know this? I answer, There is nothing can be a true sign of righteousness, but righteousness; nothing but what is an act or instance of righteousness. But then we must have a great care, that we do not argue from particular acts and instances, that we are righteous in the main: for you may as well conclude, that you are not blind, because you hear well; or that you are not deaf, because you see well; or that you have all your senses, because you have one or two; as that you are righteous in the main, because you are so in this or that particular. Well then, how shall we do to resolve ourselves in this most material inquiry? Why, do but consider what it is to be righteous, and then reflect upon your own motion, and you will quickly feel whether you are righteous or

no: for to be righteous, is for the main to intend righteously, and act accordingly. If you ask again, how you shall know whether you so intend and act; I shall only answer, that is an unreasonable question, and that you might as well ask, whether you are hungry or thirsty, because you do as naturally feel the motions of your soul as those of your body: and for you to ask another man what your own intentions are, is to make him a conjurer instead of a casuist.

Would it not look extremely ridiculous, for a man to ask his creditor or customer, Good sir, how shall I know, whether I intend to pay my debts, or am sincerely resolved not to overreach you? Should any man ask me such a question, I should only bid him consult himself; and if then he suspected his own honesty, truly, I should suspect that he had too much reason for it. For if a man intends righteously, to be sure he intends it knowingly; and if he knowingly intends it, he cannot but know he intends it: for if he cannot know that he doth it, it is because he cannot know how to do it; and if he cannot know how to do it, he is not a capable subject of morality, but must of necessity live and act at random, and blunder on like a traveller in the dark, without being able to distinguish right or wrong. Wherefore, as you would not be deceived in a point of the highest importance in the world, a point upon which your everlasting fate depends, viz. whether you are righteous men or no, do not measure yourselves by any other rule but this sure and infallible one in the text, *He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

2. From hence I infer, that seeing righteousness

is the good state of our souls, the main thing upon which we ought to value ourselves is upon our being truly righteous. For if we have any such thing as a rational and immortal soul about us, it is doubtless by far the noblest ingredient of our beings; it is that by which we are near allied to angels, and do even border upon God himself. He therefore who values himself by any thing but his soul, and that which is its grace and perfection, begins at the wrong end of himself, forgets his jewels, and estimates his estate by his lumber: insomuch that one would think it impossible, did not too many woful experiments daily evince the contrary, that any creature, owning and believing a rational and immortal spirit to be a part of its being, should be so ridiculous as to value itself by such little trifling advantages as a well-coloured skin, a suit of fine clothes, a puff of popular applause, a bag of red or white earth; and yet, God help us, these are the only things almost by which we difference ourselves from one another. You are a much better man than your neighbour, who is a poor contemptible wretch, a little, creeping, despicable animal, not worthy to be taken notice of by such a one as you. Why, in the name of God, sir, what is the matter? Where is this mighty difference between you and him? Hath he not a soul as well as you; a soul that is capable to live as long, and be as happy as yours? Yes, that is true indeed: but notwithstanding that, you thank God for it, you are another guise man than he: for you have a handsomer body; your apparel is finer and more fashionable; you live in a more splendid equipage, and have a larger purse to maintain it; and to your great comfort, your name is more in vogue, and

makes a far greater rattle in the world. And is this all the difference then between your mighty self and your poor neighbour? Alas! a few days more will put an end to all this; and when your rich attires are reduced to a windingsheet, and all your vast possessions to six foot of earth, what will become of all these little trifles by which you value yourselves so highly? Where now will be the beauty, the wealth, the port and garb, of which you are so conceited? Alas! now that lovely body will look as pale and ghastly, that lofty soul will be left as bare, as poor and naked, as your despised neighbour's; and should you now meet his wandering ghost in the vast world of spirits, what will you have left to boast of more than he; now that your beauty is withered, your wealth vanished, and all your outward pomp and splendour buried in a silent grave? Now you will have nothing left to distinguish you from the most contemptible, unless you have wiser and better souls, which are the only preeminencies above other men that will survive our funerals, and distinguish us from base and abject souls for ever. If we are now more pious and humble, and just and charitable than other men, this will stick by us when our heads are laid, and to all eternity render us glorious and happy. And indeed, when once we have thrown off our body, and all our bodily passions and necessities, the only goods we shall be capable of enjoying are God, ourselves, and the society of blessed spirits; and these are no otherwise enjoyable but only by acts of piety and virtue.

It is only by our contemplation and worship, our love and imitation of God, that we can enjoy him;

it is only by our prudence and moderation, our temperance and humility, that we can enjoy ourselves; it is only by our charity and justice, our modesty, peaceable and mutual submission and condescension to one another, that we can enjoy the glorious society of blessed spirits: but if our unbodied spirits carry with them these divine graces into the other world, we shall by them be possessed of every thing our utmost wishes can propose; of a good God, a godlike, joyous, and contented mind, a peaceful, kind, and righteous neighbourhood; and so all above, within, and without us, will be a pure and perfect heaven. So that if when I go from hence to seek my fortune in the world of spirits, God should thus bespeak me; "O man! seeing thou art now "leaving all the enjoyments of sense, consult what "will do thee good, and thou shalt have whatever "thou wilt ask to carry with thee into the spiritual "state;" I say, should God thus offer me, I am sure the utmost good I could wisely crave would be this: "Lord, give me a heart inflamed with love and "winged with duty to thee, that thereby I may "enjoy thee; give me a sober and a temperate mind, "that thereby I may enjoy myself; give me a kind, "and peaceable, and righteous temper, that thereby "I may enjoy the sweet society of blessed spirits: "O give me but these blessed things, and thou hast "crowned all my wishes, and to eternity I will "never ask any other favour for myself, but only "this, that I may continue a holy and a righteous "soul for ever: for so long as I continue so, I am "sure I shall enjoy all spiritual goods, and be as "happy as heaven can make me." What a prodi-

gious piece of folly therefore is it for men to value themselves more upon these outward advantages, of which ere long they must be stripped, than upon the graces and virtues of their own minds, on which they must subsist for ever! Suppose now you were a merchant in a far country, where you were allowed for a short uncertain time the benefit of free trade and commerce, in order to your gaining a good estate to maintain you in your native country, whenever you are forced to return, would you be so indiscreet as to lay out all the product of your merchandise in building fine houses and purchasing great farms, when you know not how soon you may be commanded to depart, and leave all the immoveable goods behind you? Or rather, would you not think yourselves obliged, by all the rules of interest and discretion, to convert all your gain into portable wealth, into money or jewels, or other such moveable commodities, as, whenever you are forced to depart, you might carry home along with you, and there maintain yourselves with them in many years ease and plenty? Do but think then, and think it often, that while you live here, you are but strangers and foreign merchants; that you came hither from another world, to which you know not how soon you may be forced to return; that all the wealth, the lands and houses, you gain by your present commerce, are immoveable goods, which you must leave behind you when you go from hence, and that there is nothing portable of all that you can gain in this world, but only the graces and virtues of your minds; and that therefore, while you have opportunity, it concerns you, above all things,

to store and treasure up a plentiful portion of these, that so, whenever you are shipped off into the eternal world, you may carry such an estate of them thither with you, as may suffice to maintain you there in glory and happiness for ever. Which God of his infinite mercy grant.

DISCOURSE IX.

UPON

1 JOHN III. 9.

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

FOR the right understanding of these words, it will be necessary to inquire, first, What is here meant by *sin*; secondly, What is meant by being *born of God*; thirdly, In what sense he that is *born of God cannot commit sin*.

First, What is here meant by *committing sin*? I answer, that this phrase, in the writings of this our apostle, hath a special energy, and doth not denote the simple doing of any sinful action whatsoever, deliberately, wilfully, and presumptuously. For as for the first, it is not true that he that is born of God doth commit no sin at all, seeing the best of God's children are liable to be surprised into evil actions through their weakness, ignorance, or inadvertency; of all which there are some remains even in the most purified natures. And as for the second, viz. the habit of sinning wilfully, though that in the apostle's sense is not only to commit sin, but to commit it in the most eminent degree; yet it is plain that it is the deliberate acts of sin that he here primarily intends: for so verse the 4th, *He that committeth sin transgresseth the law; for sin is a transgression of the law*; which is plainly meant of every single act of wilful sin. So verse 8. *He that committeth sin is of the Devil*; that is, he is therein

an imitator of the Devil, which is true of every deliberate act, as well as of the habit of sin. So here in the text, *He that is born of God doth not commit sin;* that is, understanding him still in the same sense, he doth not commit any wilful and deliberate act of sin.

2. Our next inquiry is, what is here meant by *being born of God?* To which I answer, that to be born of another denotes in general our receiving the beginning and principle of our life and motion from him; and consequently, to be born of God, is to receive from him, through the operation of his grace and Spirit, the beginning and principle of our spiritual life and motion, viz. a considerate, universal, prevailing resolution to obey God, proceeding from our belief of the Christian religion. When therefore God, by the influence of his grace and Spirit, hath wrought our minds into such a resolution, then are we truly born of him, as having herein received from him the principle of a new life and motion. And this the apostle expresses by *being transformed by the renewing of our mind,* Romans xii. 2. i. e. having a new practical judgment and resolution of soul begotten in us; and this he elsewhere calls *the renewing of the Holy Ghost,* Titus iii. 5. Upon which account we may very well be said to be born of God; because it is from his blessed Spirit that we derive this renewing, which is the principle of our spiritual life and motion.

Our last inquiry is, in what sense this assertion of the apostle holds, viz. that he who is thus born of God *cannot sin?* To which I answer, that this expression, *he cannot,* relates to the state he is now in: he cannot, as he is one that is born of God, and while

he doth continue so: for so the phrase is frequently used in scripture. So Romans viii. 7. *The carnal mind cannot be subject to God:* not but the mind which is now carnal may hereafter be subject unto God, viz. when it is renewed and changed; but it cannot be so while it continues carnal. And in the same sense he tells us in the next verse, that *it cannot please God.* So Matthew vii. 18. *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit;* which can import no more than this, that whilst the good tree continues good, it cannot bring forth evil fruits, nor the corrupt tree bring forth good fruits, whilst it continues corrupt: not but that one may hereafter become evil, and bring forth evil fruits, as well as the other may become a good tree, and bring forth good fruits. So that the meaning of *he cannot sin,* is no more than this; it is so utterly inconsistent with the state of one that is born of God to sin wilfully and deliberately, that whenever he doth so, he actually falls from that blessed state, and for the time ceases to be born of God. And hence the reason assigned why a man cannot sin wilfully, and be born of God at the same time, is, *for his seed remaineth in him;* that is, because that principle of new life and motion, which the divine Spirit hath produced in him, and which is nothing else but an universal prevailing resolution of obeying God, remains within his breast: and for a man to be universally and prevalently resolved to obey God, and at the same time to sin wilfully, is a contradiction in terms; because whenever he sins wilfully, he is prevalently resolved to disobey him. And therefore, seeing in every wilful sin we are prevalently resolved to disobey God,

while we are so, our resolution to obey him, which is the seed and principle of our divine life, must necessarily be extinguished; and consequently, till such time as by our repentance we have revived and recovered it, we must cease to be born of God. He therefore who is born of God cannot sin wilfully, because while he continues in this state his seed remains in him: which is no more reconcileable to our sinning wilfully, than contraries are in the same degree. And therefore he adds, *He cannot sin, because he is born of God;* that is, his state is such as will no more admit him wilfully to disobey God, than to be dead and alive in the same moment. But in pursuance of this argument it will be necessary yet further to inquire, what those wilful sins are which the apostle here declares to be inconsistent with a good state; or, which is the same thing, with our being born of God; the resolution of which is of absolute necessity to enable men to make a true judgment of their own state, whether it be good or bad. And in order hereunto, it will be necessary to premise the following particulars:

1. That by wilful sin, I mean the acts as well as the habits of sin.

2. That by wilful habits of sin, I mean such as are contracted by wilful acts, and are wilfully retained and indulged.

3. That by wilful acts of sin, I do not mean all evil actions which have any degree of will in them; but only such as are deliberately chosen.

4. That the same actions may be sins of weakness and sins of wilfulness in the same or different persons under different circumstances.

1. That by wilful sins, I mean the wilful acts, as

well as habits of sin. To be sure there is no sin can be consistent with our being born of God, for which the gospel binds us over to eternal condemnation: for while we thus stand bound, we are children of wrath, and so cannot be children of God at the same time. Now the law of Christ condemns us for all wilful sins whatsoever, whether they be single acts or habits; and every single wilful act is as much a transgression of the law, which threatens condemnation, as any wilful habit whatsoever. The law which forbids wilful lying, under the penalty of eternal death, doth as well forbid the single act, as the habit of wilful lying; and therefore must forbid them both under the same penalty: and indeed if it did not, there are some of the most heinous sins would escape. For there are some sins which when men have once committed, they never have opportunity to repeat; being prevented, either for want of a new occasion, or by just sentence of law; such as rape, and theft, and murder: and others which can never pass beyond a single act, such as parricide and self-murder; and so can never grow into an habit: and yet I think there is no man can doubt, but that even the single acts of these sins, supposing them wilful, do put a man into a state of condemnation. I know it is usually said that such horrible sins as these indeed do so; because the mischief of them is so great, and the malice so heinous, that it renders them equivalent to an habit of any other sin. To which I answer, the law of Christ condemns these sins, not as they are greater than others, but as they are transgressions, for which it threatens condemnation. Indeed, the greatness of the sin doth increase the condemnation; but yet the

law which condemns us for a lesser sin doth as certainly condemn us, as that which condemns us for a greater. As for instance, the law of Christ as well condemns us for drunkenness, adultery, lying, and malice, as for murder. And as every wilful act of unjust killing, is murder; so every wilful act of adultery and malice, is adultery and malice: and therefore the law of Christ condemns to far greater pains for the one than the other, yet still it condemns us for both: for that law which forbids any wilful sin indifferently under the penalty of condemnation, forbids every act of it under the same penalty; because every act of it is the sin so forbidden: and therefore we may as well say, that the law of Christ doth not condemn us for parricide and self-murder, because these are only single acts of murder, as that it doth not condemn us for any other single act of any other wilful sin. For every single act of wilful intemperance and incontinency are as truly sins against the law, which forbids them under the penalty of eternal condemnation, as those single acts of murder are against the law, which forbids murder under the same penalty; and consequently, do as well put us into a state of condemnation: and to be sure, while we are in this state, we cannot pretend to be *born of God.*

2. I premise, that by wilful habits of sin are meant such as are contracted by wilful acts, and are wilfully retained and indulged. For if you take habits of sin in the largest sense, as they signify a forward propensity, promptness, and readiness to do evil, there is no doubt but there may be sinful habits in men, which never were contracted by wilful acts: as on the contrary, there may be sinful habits contracted by wilful acts, which, though not utterly

extirpated, may yet cease to be wilful. As for instance, a man may be prompted to unreasonable anger or excessive lust, even from the natural temper and constitution of his body, without the concurrence of any wilful acts of his own: and though he may be much more disposed to be angry or lustful, than another of a cooler constitution, yet he may be much farther removed from any wilful habit of anger and lust; because the latter perhaps contracted them by his own wilful acts, and by his repeated practice of them doth still cherish and indulge them; whereas the former had no more hand in contracting them, than he had in the moulding of his own constitution; and is so far from cherishing them by any wilful acts of his own, that it is the main endeavour of his life to oppose them. And so on the other hand, a man that by frequent wilful acts of sin hath contracted wilful habits, may afterwards heartily repent, and take up a prevailing resolution of amendment: and yet still the evil habit, the promptness, or propensity to his sin, may be more or less remaining in him: but this is now so far from being wilful, that the prevailing bent and current of his will is against it: and though still his evil inclinations are ready to take fire upon every spark of temptation that falls upon them, and to blaze out into evil actions; yet by the strength of his resolution he so keeps it under, that it cannot break forth but upon a surprise; and even that surprise will render him more watchful and vigilant to suppress it for the future. But now when evil habits do not only exist in us, but are also cherished and indulged by us, and do ordinarily influence and govern our practice; they are then not only wilful sins, but a fixed and settled state of wil-

ful sins, and are pregnant with a distinct guilt and venom from those acts of wilful sin that begot them. And hence in scripture you find them marked with the blackest characters: they are called, *the root of bitterness; the evil heart;* and *concupiscence wrought by sin; the law in the members,* which those who are *carnal, and sold under sin,* do obey; *the carnal mind; the flesh, in which dwells no good;* and *enmity to God:* by all which they are sufficiently pronounced inconsistent with our being born of God.

3. I must premise, that by wilful acts of sin, I do not mean all evil actions which have any degree of will in them; but only such as are deliberately chose and consented to. Every sin is so far voluntary, as that when we choose it, we are free to refuse it; otherwise it is necessary; and what is necessary, is no fault, nor can be justly liable to reward or punishment. Those evil actions therefore, which, for distinction sake, are called sins of infirmity, are no farther sins, than as they are chosen, and have some intermixture of will in them: for if they have none, they have only the matter of sin in them, but not the form. But we are seldom so surprised with any temptation to evil, but that it is possible for us to deliberate upon it, and thereupon to resolve against it; and many times by our care and watchfulness we do prevent those evils, which, when we are more remiss, do steal upon us unawares: and we that can prevent them this moment, can prevent them the next too, and so the next, and so for ever. But then, considering the weakness and imperfection of our natures, how our wills are biassed with bad habits and inclinations, and our thoughts dispersed and squandered among the infinite diversions that surround us;

it is morally impossible, that is, it is not reasonably to be expected, that in these circumstances we should be always upon our guard against every evil object without, and every evil motion within us, so as never to be surprised, or to act unadvisedly. Whenever therefore we are so surprised into an evil action, as that we could not consider if we would, either for want of time, or for want of order and distinction in our thoughts, occasioned by some sudden tumult of passion; this is not our fault, but our infelicity, because our will is no way concerned in it. But when we are so surprised, as that notwithstanding, we might have considered, had we taken all due care to recollect ourselves, and exert our utmost attention; this is partly our fault, because there is something of will in it; but more our infelicity, because there is more of weakness and infirmity than will in it; and therefore is called a sin of infirmity; which by the merciful indulgence of the gospel is discharged of course from all eternal penalties. But if when we are tempted, we either designedly omit to consider, or consent upon consideration; this is pure malice of will, which, while we are *born of God*, can have no place in us.

4. And lastly, I must premise, that the same actions may be sins of weakness and sins of wilfulness in the same or in different persons under different circumstances. For seeing it is the willing of an evil action that makes it be a sin, it necessarily follows, that it is the willing of it in a greater or a lesser degree, that makes it a greater or a lesser sin: and it is certain, that the same sin may have more or less of will in it in the same or different persons under different circumstances. As for instance; one man

may be excusably ignorant of the evil of such an action, which another doth either know to be a sin, or would have known it, had he not been wilfully ignorant; and that sin which this man commits upon deliberation, another may be hurried into on a sudden surprise; in which case, though both do the same act, and in some sense both do it willingly too; yet because the one wills it more intensely than the other, it is a sin of wilfulness in the one, and a sin of infirmity in the other. And this holds true also in the same person, who may do the same action ignorantly and inconsiderately at one time, and knowingly and advisedly at another: and if when he hath fallen into any sin unawares, he is wilfully careless and neglective to prevent the return of it; that which now is a pitiable weakness, and as such falls under the general indulgence of the gospel, will anon be inexcusable obstinacy. From all which it is apparent, that it is not the kind of the sin, but the will of the sinner, that makes the difference between sins of weakness and wilfulness; seeing the same sins, according to the different degrees of will that are in them, may be sins of infirmity at one time, and sins of obstinacy at another. For so by the law of England, the same act of killing is distinguished into chance-medley, manslaughter, and murder: the first of which is innocent, because it hath no will in it; the second pitiable, because but imperfectly willed; the third capital, because freely chosen and fully consented to. And so also by the Christian law, the very same act under different circumstances may be an innocent error, a sin of infirmity, and a sin of wilfulness: for if it be perfectly involuntary, it is an innocent error; if imperfectly willed, it is a sin of infirmity; but

if fully consented to, a sin of wilfulness. So long therefore as the temptations of men are so infinitely various, and their capacities of resisting so unequal in different persons, there will be more or less of will in the same actions; and the same act will be far more excusable, where there is a greater temptation to it, and a less power of resisting, than it can be when the temptation is less, and the power of resisting it greater. All that can be done therefore in the case before us is this, to lay down such general rules of distinction between sins of infirmity and sins of wilfulness, as that thereby every man that hath the free use of his own faculties may, upon a due consideration of his particular circumstances, distinguish whether his sin be wilful or no. For when all is done, every man must thus far be his own casuist; it being impossible for another to determine what degrees of will there are in his sin, unless he knew under what circumstances he committed it, because different circumstances do vary the case, and make the sin be more or less voluntary.

These things premised, I come now particularly to state what those sins are, upon the commission of which we cease to be *born of God:* and these I shall rank under three heads: 1. Sins of wilful ignorance. 2. Sins of wilful inconsideration. 3. Sins against knowledge and consideration.

1. Sins of wilful ignorance; I say wilful, to exclude all invincible and unaffected ignorance. By invincible ignorance, I mean such as we neither do nor can surmount, by the utmost improvement we can make of our reason. For sure, not to understand what we cannot understand is not at all criminal; and if our ignorance be innocent, whatever

is the necessary effect of it must be so too; all necessary effects being of a common nature with their causes. And certainly, no man breathing can be innocent, if he be not so who acts to the best of his knowledge, and knows to the best of his capacity. For so our Saviour himself pronounces concerning the Pharisees; *If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now you say, that you see; therefore your sin remains,* John ix. 41.

By unaffected ignorance, I mean such as is vincible, but by reason of some innocent hinderances, such as the obscurity of the object, or the weakness of the capacity, or the innocent prejudice and prepossession of the understanding, is not to be removed without extreme difficulty; which, though it be so far sinful, as it is within the reach of our power to be better informed, yet is by no means to be accounted a wilful sin. For if it be wilful sin not to know and to do the will of God to the utmost of our power, there is no sin in the world but what is wilful; because it is no sin at all not to do more than our utmost. But then there is a wilful and affected ignorance, which proceeds either from our profane contempt and regardlessness of God, by which we have so far extinguished our natural sense of religion, as not to think it worth the while to concern ourselves about it, and so rudely stop our ears against all the means of instruction; or else this wilful ignorance arises from some sinful prejudice against the knowledge of the truth begotten in us by some darling lust, which, that we may quietly enjoy without any remorse of conscience, we industriously shun all the means of conviction, and either exclude all thoughts of religion from our

minds, lest they should discover to us the evil and danger of our sin, (which is the way of those who are openly profane and irreligious,) or endeavour to wheedle our own understandings to such false opinions as are soft, and easy, and indulgent to our lusts, (which is the way of hypocrites and false pretenders to religion.) Now, as for this sort of ignorance, it springs from a wicked will, and is not so much to be imputed to the weakness of our understandings, as to the depravedness of our affections: they are the impure vapours from below that cloud the sky above, and overcast the intellectual region with darkness and confusion. And if we are ignorant of our duty, because we will not be informed, our ignorance is so far from excusing our neglect of it, that itself is inexcusable. If I commit a sin, because I am wilfully ignorant, the wilfulness of my ignorance makes my sin to be wilful. Here the effect always partakes of the nature of the cause, and derives into itself all its venom and malignity; and therefore if my ignorance be wilful sin, whatever sins it betrays me into, they must be all wilful as well as that. And hence our Saviour tells us, that *this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light*, John iii. 19.

2. Another sort of wilful sins are sins of wilful inconsideration. I say wilful, because there are sundry evils whereinto we are perfectly surprised; as, when temptations start out so suddenly upon us, as that either for want of time, or the great hurry and tumult it puts our thoughts into, is not in our power to consider and deliberate; in which case we are not capable subjects of law and morality. For that which makes us capable subjects is, first, that we are rational

agents, and so can deliberate what is best to choose. 2. That we are free agents, and so can choose what is best upon deliberation; without which, madmen and natural fools are as capable subjects of law as we. Whenever therefore our circumstances are such, that we cannot deliberate, and choose upon deliberation, though the actions we do are materially evils, yet are they not formally sins; because, while we do them we are not capable subjects of the law that forbids them, nor consequently accountable to it. As for instance; it is doubtless a great sin, and deserves a great punishment, for a man to wound his friend, or abuse his benefactor; but yet in a madman it is no sin at all, because when he doth it, he is incapable of being governed by the law that forbids it. And this, I judge, is the case of men under perfect surprises, when they are violently hurried into evil actions, in a sudden distraction and confusion of thoughts; which doubtless may sometimes be the case of very good men, especially under great pains, or the sudden appearance of frightful dangers, which for the present, at least, may distract and scare them out of all capacity and deliberation: and at other times, while their thoughts are innocently wandering among the vast variety of outward objects, a temptation may suddenly break in, and prevail upon them, before they have time to recollect themselves. For we find by experience, that the mind hath not an absolute dominion over the will, as to make it choose or refuse at its beck, upon the bare proposal of good or evil objects; but many times, before it can prevail, is fain to dispute it out with our passions and appetites, and to oppose their importunities with more prevalent motives to the

contrary: and therefore if it should fall out, that in that moment when the temptation comes, the mind shall be very much diverted by other employments, it is in many cases morally impossible, but passion and appetite should prevail, and obtain our consent before the mind is aware of it; because that being at present otherwise employed, and always unable to attend many things at once, it cannot be ready in the present exigence immediately to urge the arguments on its own side, and to detect the fallacies on the other. Though this, I confess, will hardly hold in any gross acts of sin; because in these there is generally some pause and interval between the temptation and the action, wherein the mind may easily be advised with; which, if it be a good mind, cannot fail to suggest sufficient arguments against it: but if the temptation doth so hurry the man, as that he cannot deliberate, he is so far innocent: and if as soon as he considers, he retracts the evil consent into which his will was surprised, before it passes into action; or if having acted it before he was aware, he becomes more wary and watchful for the future, it is not so much his fault as his misery. It is true, there are surprises of temptations which are not innocent: but then the reason is, because they are not pure surprises, but such as do not incapacitate us to deliberate: and if when it is in our power we either do not deliberate at all, or not enough, but make a rash and foolish choice, when, if we had used our utmost care, we might have chosen more advisedly, our choice is culpable, and so is the action thence proceeding. But seeing ours is the religion of men, and not of angels; and it cannot reasonably be expected, considering our circum-

stances, that we should always do as well as possibly we can; it is to be supposed, that this religion of ours, which is purposely accommodated to our imperfect state, admits of us to be good in the main, though we are not so to perfection; or, which is the same thing, to the utmost of our possibility. For while our soul is fain to minister to a body, and hath so quick a sense of its necessities, and while we are encompassed with so vast a variety of tempting objects, and our thoughts are so dispersed and squandered amongst them, it is morally impossible but that many of our actions should be unadvised, and pass our watch without a severe examination: nor can it reasonably be expected that we should in all cases, where it is in our power, so precisely weigh every minute circumstance of our actions, as to determine exactly on which side our duty lies: and therefore should our religion exact this of us, without any mitigation or abatement, I doubt, that even the best of men would never be able to abide the test of it. But then, besides this kind of inconsideration, which is either purely involuntary, and by consequence innocent, or but partly voluntary, and so excusable; there is another sort of it, which is absolutely and inexcusably wilful. And this is twofold, viz. actual and habitual. Actual is either when, notwithstanding we have been sufficiently forewarned by precedent surprises, we are wilfully neglective of ourselves, and take no care to fortify our minds by consideration against them, in case they should return again upon us; or when upon the appearance of a prevailing temptation we either quench the good motions of our own consciences, and refuse to consider the evil and danger of the

sin we are tempted to, lest we should be deterred from committing it; or purposely contrive to baffle our own consideration, and to render it ineffectual, by opposing against it, either some ungrounded hope of impunity, or some fallacious promise of future amendment: in all which cases our inconsideration is apparently wilful, and so consequently must the sins be which follow upon it: and he who pleads his own wilful inconsideration as an excuse for his sin, doth only apologize for one fault by another; which, instead of extenuating, inflames and aggravates it. And then, as for habitual inconsideration, it is the effect of our frequent stifling the convictions of our own consciences, whereby we sear them into a deep insensibility of good and evil, so as that at last we sin on without remorse, and return to our lusts with a perfect indifferency, without ever considering what we do, or reflecting upon what we have done. Now as it is no excuse for our sin, if it proceeds from a sinful habit, contracted by frequent acts of wilful sin, so neither will it excuse our sin, that it proceeds from an habitual inconsideration, contracted by often refusing to consider. And as vicious habits have a proper evil and guiltiness in them, distinct from those vicious acts that produce them; so habitual inconsideration hath in it a peculiar venom of its own, beyond what was in those wilful acts of inconsideration whereby it was contracted. And accordingly, in scripture it is described as the most desperate state of sinners: it is to be *past feeling*; which was the condition of the lewdest and most irreclaimable Gentiles, Eph. iv. 19. it is to have a *seared conscience*, the character of sinners under the last apostasy, 1 Tim. iv. 2. it is to

tue of the great sacrifice for sin hath no place, without a special and particular repentance, and consequently there is no other remedy left for us in the gospel; all that remains is what follows in the next verse, viz. *a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, to devour the adversary.* From whence it follows, that upon our sinning knowingly and wilfully in any particular instance, we fall into a state of wrath and condemnation, and consequently fall from the happy state of our regeneration, or *being born of God.*

And now to conclude this argument, from the whole I infer, the horrible evil of consenting to any known sin, after we have entered into good resolutions to the contrary; which will plainly appear upon the following considerations:

1. Consider the shameful weakness and impotency of it. For such resolutions, if they are well formed, are grounded on the strongest and most momentous reasons in the world: and for a man to cancel a resolution enforced with such powerful motives, for a mere vanity, or to gratify some foolish and importunate lust, the pleasure of which dies away in the enjoyment, argues him to have a base and prostitute mind, that hath no strength of thought or steadfastness of will in it; but is whiffled up and down, like a feather in the air, by every little counterblast of wind.

2. Consider the prodigious hazard to which we expose ourselves by it. For by every wilful sin, after such a resolution, we throw ourselves headlong from the best, into the worst estate in the world; from a state of love, into a state of wrath; from being *born of God,* to being a *son of perdition:* and

if we thence be snatched away, before we have recovered our relapse, (as who knows but we may,) we shall die for ever, and, by one desperate act of folly, fall from heaven into hell. But suppose we should survive our sin, and be allowed a space of repentance; yet is it a mighty hazard whether ever we make a good use of it. For when by one wilful sin we have made a breach into our good resolution, in all probability that will open the gap for another to follow, and that for another, till thereby our evil habits at last recover their full power, and then our will and practice will be laid open again into a common thoroughfare of iniquity. For when we consented to the first sin, it was with a promise of repenting immediately; and upon the same promise, in all probability, upon the next temptation we shall consent to a second, and so to a third; and by this train the Devil will toll us on through a long course of sin, till at length our will is depraved again, and our conscience seared, and then we shall lay aside all thoughts of repentance.

3. Consider the great sorrow and remorse that must follow upon our sin, in case we should repent of it. For to be sure, before we can heartily repent of it, our mind must be stung with many severe reflections upon our own wretched weakness and impotence, and our falseness and perfidiousness to our own engagements and resolutions, upon the affront we have given to our good God, and the vile contempt we have offered to his most righteous authority, and our ungrateful grieving his holy Spirit, whereby, before we committed this wickedness, we *are sealed unto the day of redemption*: all which, if we have any thing of good-nature and ingenuity,

and much more if we have any the least footstep or remains of the divine seed, by which we were *born of God*, must necessarily create in us a most pungent sorrow and remorse, whenever we reflect upon it; a sorrow that will be much more than equivalent to the highest pleasure we can hope for from any wilful sin: and for a man to commit such a sin, upon a presumption that he shall repent of it, when he cannot but foresee, if he be in his wits, that his repentance will cost him far more sorrow than his sin will yield him pleasure, is all folly and madness.

4. Consider how much of that ground we lose back by every wilful sin, which by hitherto keeping true to our good resolution we had gotten against our evil inclinations. Our religion can never be easy to us, till in some good measure we have mortified and extinguished our depraved inclinations: for till then, in the whole course of our religious practice, we shall row against the stream, and be continually warring against and doing violence to ourselves. But if when a man hath once entered into a good resolution he takes care to pursue it, he will find by degrees his bad inclinations decay and wear off: and proportionably as they decay, piety and virtue will grow more and more natural and easy to him. But when a man hath for some time faithfully pursued his good resolution, and hath thereby got a great deal of ground of his bad inclinations; if then he unravels it by any one wilful act of sin, his bad inclinations will thereby recover all those degrees of strength and vigour which they lost in the past course of his piety and virtue: so that now he must be forced to begin the whole work of his religion again, and to struggle through all those difficulties

which he had surmounted. Now he must fight over again all the victories he had gotten, before he can regain that command and empire of himself, to which he was arrived before he revolted from his good resolution; and thus for a moment's satisfaction he foolishly creates himself a long and tedious labour.

5. And lastly, Consider how by every wilful sin you will weaken and impair those comfortable hopes you had arrived to, by persevering in your good resolution. While you persevere in well-doing, your minds will be all along entertained and refreshed with the growing hopes of your reconciliation with God at present, and of a glorious immortality to succeed: and those blessed hopes will every day improve upon your hands, till at length they are ripened into a full assurance; the comfort which will mightily spirit and enliven all your religious endeavours, and carry you on with indefatigable vigour through all the weary stages of your duty. But now by committing of any wilful sin, thereby you throw yourselves out of the arms of God's favour, and give up all your pretensions to eternal happiness: and though by your serious repentance you should afterwards recover to the blessed condition from whence you were fallen; yet in all probability it will be a great while before you will be able to recover those blessed hopes from whence you are fallen. For the sense of your past lapse, if you have any modesty in you, will make you very anxious and doubtful of yourselves, and render you extremely fearful and suspicious, lest you should fall again, and so only sin and repent, and repent and sin on,

till at length you have sinned yourselves beyond repentance: and these very just fears and jealousies will very much hinder the growth of your hopes, and cause them to spring by slow and insensible degrees.

DISCOURSE X.

UPON

JOHN XIV. 27.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

THESE words are a part of our Saviour's farewell discourse to his disciples; in which, after he had given them some necessary instructions for the information of their faith and conduct of their manners, in which, after he had comforted them with the assurance that ere long he would return again to them by his holy Spirit, and assist them in their work, and support them under their troubles, he takes a solemn leave of them, *Peace I leave with you;* which, among the Hebrews, was the usual form of salutation when they met or parted, *Shalom lacha,* "Peace be unto you." Where by *peace* they meant all manner of blessings: so that it was equivalent to all those three salutations among the Greeks, χαίρειν, ὑγιαίνειν, εὐπράττειν, in which they wished to each other satisfaction of mind, health of body, and success of affairs. So that in this salutation, *Peace I leave with you,* our Saviour wishes all good to his disciples; of which, peace, strictly taken, is one of the principal instances. Nor, saith he, do I only wish peace to you in general; but I give you my peace, or the wish and salutation of my peace: which is a much better peace than that which men have hitherto enjoyed, an inward peace of mind and

soul, founded upon much surer grounds and better principles than those which natural reason and philosophy pretend to. And this new kind of peace, which is properly mine, because founded upon my principles, *I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.* The men of the world give the salutation of peace to each other many times out of mere compliment, without any real wish or hearty meaning; and when they mean what they say, it is commonly nothing but an empty, impotent wish, that conduces nothing, or at least not enough, to the peace and satisfaction of those whom they salute. But as for my part, as I give you the salutation of peace, so I heartily mean, and wish that you may enjoy it: nor do I only wish you peace, but I have also taken care to furnish you with such abundant means and effectual principles of peace, as that, if you are not extremely wanting to yourselves, you cannot long be without it. The words thus explained, the sense of them may be resolved into this proposition:

That our blessed Lord, as he heartily wishes peace and quiet of mind to all his disciples and followers, so he hath taken care to furnish them with the most sufficient and effectual means to obtain it: the truth of which evidently appears upon a full consideration of these two particulars:

First, That he hath taken the most effectual care to remove from us all the causes of trouble and disquiet of mind.

Secondly, That he hath taken care to supply us with the most effectual principles of peace and satisfaction of mind.

I. I shall begin with the first of these, viz. That

our blessed Lord hath taken the most effectual care to remove from us all the causes of trouble and disquiet of mind; and they are principally these five:

1. The sense of guilt.

2. False and extravagant estimations of the good things of the world.

3. Our taking up wrong measures and opinions of the evils of the world.

4. An effeminate softness and delicacy of temper.

5. Misplacing our happiness in things that are out of our own power.

One cause of disquiet of mind is the sense of guilt. For God hath imprinted such an awful apprehension of his own invisible power and majesty on our minds, that whenever we reflect upon the manifold provocations we have given him to arm his omnipotent vengeance against us, it must naturally suggest very anxious and direful thoughts to our minds, and fill us with black and horrible apprehensions of the fatal consequents of his wrath and displeasure against us. So that till such time as men have stupified their natural sense of God, by a long custom and inveterate habit of sinning, it will be as impossible for them to be at peace under the apprehension of his displeasure, as it is to sleep with an alarm in their ears. But till such time as our Saviour had procured for us the new covenant, by which God had solemnly obliged himself to pardon us upon our repentance, sinful men, though true penitents, could never have arrived at that degree of security that God was reconciled to them, as is necessary to set their minds at rest, and free them from anxiety. For though to repent is the best thing a sinner can do, yet this doth not at all alter

the nature of the sin he repents of, so as to render it less evil, or less deserving of punishment: and so long as the desert of punishment remains, God hath a natural right to execute it; and so long we can never be certain whether he will exact it or no. Some wavering hopes a poor penitent might have arrived to, upon the consideration of the infinite benignity of the divine nature; but the utmost comfort he could have given himself was that of the penitent king of Nineveh; *Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?* Jonah iii. 9. But, alas! when a man's mind is hagged and ridden with his guilts, *who can tell?* is such a poor relief, as must necessarily leave it extremely anxious and desponding. But now, upon our Saviour's procuring for us the new covenant, you and I, and every one of us, can tell, and that with as much certainty as that God is true, that if we do repent and turn from our evil ways, God will turn and repent of his anger and displeasure against us. So that now, all we have to do is to reflect upon ourselves, and examine whether we are true penitents or no; whether we have submitted our will to God's, with a full purpose and resolution to fly whatever he forbids, and follow whatever he commands us; and if we have, we may, upon the terms of the new covenant, from thence as certainly conclude that he is reconciled to us, and that his high displeasure against us is all converted into the dearest kindness and complacency, as we can that he is God, or, which is all one, that he is true and faithful: which doubtless is one of the most solid foundations of peace and satisfaction in the world. For what can disturb me, while I feel

myself lodged in his arms and embraces, whose wisdom, I am sure, no craft can outwit, and with whose power no force is able to contend. Here I dwell as in an impregnable fortress, where nothing can come at me, but what is for my good: how then can any thing prove adverse to me, while he is my friend, in whose hands and disposal every thing that concerns me is placed.

2. Another cause of disquiet of mind is, our false and extravagant estimations of the good things of this world. The main spring of those troubles which perplex our minds is the goods and evils that are without us, and without our power and disposal, in which we commonly fancy far more good and evil than really there is. We look upon the good things of this world as unskilful spectators do on landscapes; in which, while they stand at a distance, they fancy they behold here a smiling meadow, there a delightful grove, and there a lofty mountain; but upon a nearer approach, and more considerate view, find all this goodly prospect to be nothing but a coarse canvass, artificially painted with colours and shadows.

Thus, while we behold the riches, the pleasures, and the honours of this world at a distance, to our wild imaginations there appear vast mountains of happiness in them, fruitful fields of pleasure, delightful groves of content and satisfaction; which, while we are in the pursuit of them, fills our minds full of cares, and anxious and solicitous thoughts about them; but then, as we approach nearer to them, and come to survey them more closely, the mountains presently dwindle into molehills, the fields and the groves into empty shadows; and after all our labour

and care to possess ourselves of them, our enjoyment of them amounts not to the tithe of our hope; and so we are still restless and unsatisfied, both while we are in the quest and while we are in the possession of them. While we are in the pursuit of them, we are wild and imaginative; we swell with fantastic joys, and juggle ourselves into expectations as great and eager as our own desires: but as soon as we are possessed of them, we presently find their vanity and emptiness; and perceiving how little they are able to perform of those vast things they promised us, our abused fancy, that had raised itself with high and swelling expectations, falls flat underneath the disappointments of fruition; and so, while we are following, we are restless, and when we have overtaken them, we are dissatisfied: all which arises from those extravagant estimations we make of them. Whereas, did we but value them as they are, and according to the true rules of reason and religion, we should pursue them with far more indifference, and enjoy them with far more content. While we are in pursuit of them, we should look upon them as things without which we may be happy; and consequently, as things that have not worth enough in them to deserve of us any mighty care or solicitude, and so we should follow them with a calm and sedate mind; and entering into the possession of them with a moderate expectation, we should find every thing in them that we hoped for: for all the good that they promised, they would be sure to perform; and so we should have no disappointed hope to vex and disturb us, but our expectation would be entirely satisfied in our enjoyment. Thus, would we take care to fix in our minds a true estimation of

the good things of this world, and to prize them at those rates that our religion sets upon them, they would never be able to give us half the disturbance they now do: for then we should look upon them as things that are extrinsic to our happiness, as things that we may want without damage, or enjoy without advantage to our main interest; and esteeming them as such, we should pursue them with much less concern, and enjoy them with much more satisfaction; we should not be vexed with such an impatient desire of gaining them, nor alarmed with so many tormenting fears of losing them; but with St. Paul, we should know both how to want them, and how to abound in them, and to undergo both fortunes with a calm and cheerful mind.

3. Another cause of disquiet of mind is, our taking up wrong measures and opinions of the evils of the world. As for those evils which are only the object of our faith and reason, and such are the eternal evils of the other world, we are apt to lessen and diminish them, and flatter ourselves with soft and easy apprehensions of them; but those that strike upon our sense, we are ever prone to swell and magnify them, which is the reason that the former disquiet us too little, and the latter too much; though our disquiet for the one is necessary to prevent them, whereas our trouble for the other doth only serve to render them more grievous and oppressive. For the greatest power these outward sensible evils have to hurt and damnify us, they derive from our own imagination, which oftentimes disguises them in grim and frightful vizards, and makes them appear to us a thousand times more terrible than they are; insomuch that the prospect and apprehension is ge-

nerally more grievous to us than the sense and experience of them; and what we imagine in them is far more than what we feel. And thus we turn each whip into a scorpion, and swell our molehill into a mountain of misery; so that the greatest part of what we suffer, is generally of our own creating, because we suffer not only the real evils which are in the things themselves, but, which are commonly more, the fantastic too, which our imagination forms and affixes to them. So that would we but take care to strip realities from fantastry, it would be impossible for those evils which we feel or fear, to give us half the disturbance that they do: and the only way for us to do this is to take our measures of these outward evils from religion, which will soon satisfy us, that they are nothing near so formidable in themselves as we imagine them. For, as for instance, what mighty matter is there in the loss of these outward goods which are all so extrinsic to our happiness, which cannot help us in our greatest needs, nor make us easy in their fullest enjoyment, and which thousands enjoy not, and yet are a thousand times more happy than those who possess them in the greatest abundance? Again, what great evil is it for a man to be contemned, and reproached, and vilified? For as for these things, they are good or evil as we please to fancy them; and there is scarce any other venom in them, than what our own imagination doth infuse. If we think them great evils, they will be sure to vex and discompose us, which is the greatest injury they can do us: but if we scorn and despise them, they are impotent things, which, like wildfire, do only crack and vanish into air, but leave no formidable effects behind them.

To name no more, what mighty hurt is there in being *persecuted for righteousness' sake*? Suppose I were banished from my friends and native country, do I not see men every day undertake a voluntary exile, and banish themselves into the remotest parts of the world, only to get an estate, or to learn experience, or satisfy a curiosity? For all the difference between one and the other is only this, that the one is forced, and the other voluntary; and why the one should be worse than the other, there can be no other reason assigned but only this, that we imagine it so. Could we but cure our erroneous fancy, such banishment would be only a more advantageous travel; since doubtless he who travels to save his conscience and innocence, and secure his hopes of everlasting bliss, makes the best voyage in the world. Suppose I should suffer a close imprisonment, and be secluded from human conversation, is it such a deplorable thing for a man to be kept within doors, to be snatched out of the crowd and hurry of the world, and be forced to retire within himself, and converse with God, and heaven, and his own thoughts? Are not these company enough to entertain our solitudes, and to supply the want of the noise of the world, in which there is commonly so much of discord and impertinence? But then suppose the worst that you can suppose; that you should suffer a tormenting death, and be chased out of the world with the severest instruments of human cruelty. It is certain that ere long you must have died, whether you had suffered martyrdom or no; only now you die a little sooner, and so anticipate your eternal happiness. And if you had died a natural death, perhaps the torment might have been

much greater; you might have languished much longer under the gout, or stone, or strangury, than under the hands of the executioner; and endured the same degree of torment, without the comfort of dying in a brave cause, and being assured of an immortal recompense. Thus religion sets the evils of this world in a true light, and represents them to us in their own natural forms and colours, without any of that terrible pomp in which our imagination is so apt to dress and disguise them; it assures us that they are all designed for our good, and are convertible into it; and if we take care to make a wise and pious use of them, we shall be the better for them for ever; it certifies us that they can deprive us of no good, but what, ere long, we shall be insensible of for ever; and by thus exposing these evils naked to us, it shews us their nakedness and impotence, and thereby deprives them of the power they borrow of our fancies, to disturb our tranquillity and peace.

4. Another cause of disquiet of mind is an effeminate softness and delicacy of temper, arising from our neglect of exercising those virtues which naturally tend to confirm and fortify the mind against troublesome and disquieting accidents; such as faith, patience, and self-denial, submission and resignation to God; which, when like so many guardian angels they pitch their tents about the soul, are an invincible defence to her against the strokes and impressions of misfortune; and without which she is left altogether naked and unguarded, amidst all the disquieting accidents that surround her. For in the absence of these heavenly graces a man hath nothing wherewithal to resist any evil that befalls him, but only the insensible stupidity and brutal sturdi-

nest of his temper, which can never hold out long under any pressing calamity; and when once these are broke, by the repeated strokes and impressions of unfortunate accidents, the man presently dissolves into softness and effeminacy. For now, the natural brawniness of temper being worn away, like a stone with the continual droppings of rain, his mind will become so tender, and sore, and uneasy, that every little touch of misfortune will pain and disturb him; in which case he can derive no relief from his reason, having all along disused himself to advise and consult with it; and so every alarm of danger from without presently raises a tumult within, and puts his whole soul into an uproar, in which his mind is left naked of all relief, and utterly abandoned of those wise and brave thoughts which should guard and defend it. But now, had he taken care but to educate his mind in the school of Christianity, that, by instructing him in all those manly virtues of patience and temperance, constancy and resignation to the will of God, would have inspired him by degrees with such an invincible staiedness and firmness of spirit, as would have rendered his peace and tranquillity impregnable against all the assaults of misfortune. And when all is done, these virtues are the best protection we have against the power of those calamitous accidents that surround us. For when by temperance a man hath weaned himself from the pleasures of the body; when by patience he hath hardened himself against the pains and displeasures of it; when by constancy to himself he hath acquired a continual presence of mind, and ready use of his reason and consideration; when by frequent acts of resignation to God he hath reduced himself

to an habit of embracing every accident as a token of love, and bidding every thing welcome that befalls him; when, I say, these happy effects are produced in him, he is as safe and secure from the disquieting power of these evil accidents below, as if he lived in the uppermost regions of the air, where he enjoys a perpetual calm and serenity, where he tramples upon clouds, and is above all storms; and with a cheerful and composed mind can sit securely, smiling at the rolling thunder below, whilst it grumbles and bursts underneath his feet. Thus will the constant practice of these excellent graces so steel and harden our tender minds, that those evils will be able to make no impression on us, which now do wound us to the heart. For as the light of the sun, and freshness of the air, which are apt to offend the sickly and tender, are not only tolerable, but delightful to men of hale and vigorous constitutions; so many of the little hardships which trouble and incommode the tender and delicate, are so far from disturbing patient and temperate minds, that they rather refresh and divert them.

5. And lastly, Another cause of disquiet of mind is our misplacing our happiness in things that are out of our own power. For happiness is the great loadstone that attracts and governs all our motions, the mark of all our aims and intentions, and the end of all our deliberate actions. Whilst therefore we place our happiness in things that are out of our power, we must be governed by things that are out of our power; and while we are so, we can never be quiet. For the things that are out of our power, being all of them casual and contingent, such as honour, and greatness, and carnal

pleasures; we can never be secure of the comfort and happiness we place in them; and consequently our happiness and misery must be as casual and contingent as the goods and evils are from whence they do arise. And whilst we are governed by such casual things as these, we can never be our own men; but must live in subjection to a foreign power, and be what the things that govern us will have us; and so long as the passions and appetites that overrule us are overruled by the chances and contingencies without us, we must be as various, as fickle, and as multiform as they. Whilst therefore we place our happiness in these uncertain enjoyments, it is impossible our mind should ever be at rest; but, like a ship in a tempestuous sea, must be perpetually tossed and driven to and fro by the furious gusts of our own passions, which can never be calm and sedate, till we fix upon a happiness that is certain and stable: for as our desires can never be satisfied, till we are completely happy; so our fears can never be composed, till such time as we are secure of our happiness. But so empty and fickle is all worldly good, that we can never be happy in it or secure of it: for when we have what we did first desire, that only inflames our thirst, and makes us gasp for more; and then the tenure of all is so insecure, that the accession of more doth only increase our fear of losing what we have. So that our mind must be perpetually ground between these two restless millstones, the desire of getting more, and the fear of losing what we enjoy. And therefore, seeing it is impossible for us to alter the nature of these outward goods, or to render them either more secure or more satisfying, the only way for us to be truly

happy, is to alter the temper of our own minds, to wean them from this world, and determine them to an happiness that is more solid and substantial, and within our own disposal; and such a happiness is that which Christianity proposes to us; an happiness that depends upon our own free acts, and grows out of the graces and virtues of our own mind. For so that everlasting heaven which the gospel proposes to us is inseparably annexed to the right and good use of our natural liberty, and consequently is as much within our power, as our own resolutions and voluntary motions. Whilst therefore we are under the government of this Christian happiness, we are masters of our own fortunes, and do live independently on chance and the wills of men; and it is within our own power to be happy, without asking leave of any but God and ourselves. Now we are no longer tenants at will to the little casualties and accidents of the world; no longer liable to be turned out of our happiness by storms, or fires, or invasions, by the contingencies of Providence, or the knaveries and cruelties of men; no more exposed, like miserable vagrants, to beg our happiness from door to door; to creep, and cringe, and fawn to the humours of an inconstant world; to court its smiles, or tremble at its frowns. For if heaven be the happiness we depend on, there is nothing can deprive us of it but our own free acts; and it is as much in our power not to be miserable, as not to be wicked; and our happiness being all embarked in the same bottom with our piety and virtue, they must both of them run the same fate, and either swim or sink together. If therefore we would be at peace within ourselves, we must put ourselves under the government of the

happiness of Christians; which is the only one that we can be sure of, there being no other within our own power and disposal: for till this is done, we are like men in a crowd, encompassed about with so many cross rencountering accidents, as will never let us be at rest, but be perpetually shoving and jostling us to and fro; and still as we get free from one, another will be pressing upon us; and that which thrusts on this, will still be thrust on by another, without any pause or intermission; and so our miserable minds will be always hurried about, and never want causes of disquiet. But when once we have fixed upon that happiness above, we shall be so much above these little accidents below, and their force will be so broken before they can reach us, that we shall scarce be sensible of their faint impressions; and so we shall pass on as quietly and undisturbedly through them, as we do now through those crowds of motes that are always dancing in the air about us.

And so I have despatched the first thing I proposed; which was, to shew that our blessed Lord, in order to his giving us his peace, hath removed from us all causes of disquiet.

II. I now proceed to the second; which is to shew, that he hath also taken care to supply us with the most effectual principles of peace and satisfaction of mind: and they are these following:

1. That by the sacrifice of himself he hath purged away our guilts, and thereby given us the most certain ground of peace of conscience.

2. That as he sacrificed himself for us, while he was upon earth; so now he is in heaven, he hath the ordering and disposal of every thing that concerns or befalls us.

for us in virtue of that sacrifice which he offered on earth; and in the virtue of this his meritorious intercession all power is given him in heaven and earth. And indeed herein consists the royalty of his priesthood, viz. that by interceding for us as a priest, and continuing so to do, he first obtained, and still continues vested with a kingly power and authority, to bestow upon us all those heavenly blessings he intercedes for. And hence all the graces and favours of God are in scripture said to be derived to us, *in*, or *by*, or *through Jesus Christ*; implying, that as it is from God the Father originally that all our mercies flow, so it is through God the Son immediately, that they are handed and derived to us; and that interceding for us as he doth, and always hath done, in virtue of the powerful oratory of his sacrifice, he was first constituted, and is still continued, the royal distributer of all his Father's graces and favours to mankind. So that now we are assured there is nothing can happen to us, good or bad, but by his merciful disposal: and can we think any thing bad that comes from his hand, who hath evidenced himself so much our friend as to die for us? He who loved us to such a stupendous degree as to come down from heaven and assume our natures, and therewith all our innocent infirmities and miseries; and at last to suffer for us the most grievous and infamous death; can he be unkind to us now he is our king, and hath the ordering and disposal of all our affairs? Whenever therefore any calamitous accident befalls us, and we begin to grieve or repine at it, let us remember, that it is through his permission or appointment, who was so much our friend while he was upon earth, that he tendered

our welfare far beyond his own life: and if this doth not set our hearts at rest, and reconcile us to the worst of things that can happen to us, we are beyond the reach and influence of reason and discourse. For how can we suspect any thing to be hurtful to us, that he sent us down from our merciful Redeemer in heaven; who, when he was upon earth, never thought any thing, no, not his own life and blood, too much, or too dear for us? How grievous soever therefore any present accident may appear to us, the hand it came from speaks and declares it to be a token of love; since to be sure nothing but love can proceed from that hand, whose heart alway loved us far above its own ease, and joy, and life.

3. Another principle of peace and satisfaction of mind, wherewith our Saviour hath supplied us, is this, that he hath procured for us a futurity sufficient to make us infinite amends for the worst of evils that can befall us here: for he hath not only purchased for us life and immortality at the price of his blood, but hath also clearly discovered and brought it to light by his gospel; the joyous prospect of which is abundantly sufficient to support our spirits under the most direful accidents. For now when any melancholy apprehensions begin to invade my mind, this blessed theme furnishes me with such a mighty force of joyous considerations, as are abundantly sufficient to dispel and scatter them, and cause them to fly away like the morning mists before the rising sun. Hold out, O my faith and patience; it is but a very little while that I have to suffer: this woful dream that now lies hovering over my imagination will vanish as soon as I awake in eternity, and be as if it had never been at all. These all these and remem-

bruises shall in one moment be for ever lost, and swallowed up in one continued everlasting joy; there I shall unload myself at once of all my present sighs and griefs, and in their room take up eternal songs of praise and hallelujahs; there I shall be placed far above all these clouds and storms, in a calm and quiet region, where there is nothing but light and harmony, nothing but peace, and joy, and love; from thence I shall ere long look down upon this dark unquiet atmosphere, and remember with joy all the foul tempestuous weather I here endured, and have now surmounted; and the glad remembrance of what is past will then serve only as a foil or shadow, to set off that blessed state of things, and render it more charming and illustrious. Why then art thou cast down, O my soul, under the sense of those shortlived transitory evils, of which within this very few moments thou shalt be sure to take leave for ever? Though this night be dark, it is but short; and then will follow an everlasting day. Though thy voyage be foul, it is not long; it is only a short day's sail to a blessed eternity; from whose happy shores thou will a little while hence be looking back upon this boisterous sea, and blessing those angry storms and waves that drove and hastened thee to that happy port; where every moment's enjoyment will be sufficient to recompense thee a thousandfold for all the hardships under which thou art now suffering and complaining. Such thoughts as these, that blessed futurity our Saviour hath purchased for us do naturally suggest to our minds; which, mingling with the utmost griefs and anxieties that any evil from without can raise within us, are abundantly sufficient to compose and calm them, and to create a happy se-

rebity in our own breast; while all without us is stormy and tempestuous. For what outward evil is there weighty enough to sink a mind that hath the hope of an everlasting heaven to support it?

4. Another principle of peace and satisfaction of mind, wherewith our Saviour hath supplied us, is this; that he hath established this happy futurity upon such terms and conditions as are within the reach of our own power, that is, upon faith in Christ, and repentance from dead works; which though in this degenerate state of our nature it be not immediately in our power to perform, yet mediately it is, by those helps and assistances which God hath promised to us, and inseparably annexed to our making a good use of our own natural power: for since God by his own free promise hath entailed the assistances of his grace upon our honest endeavour, his grace is as much at our devotion as our own faculties; and it is as much in our power to perform what we cannot without his grace, as it is to perform what we can: and therefore, seeing by his assistance we can perform the conditions of eternal life, it is in our power to perform them; because it is no less within our power to oblige him to assist us, than it is to oblige ourselves to exert our own power and endeavours; the condition of our happiness being through the grace of God within our own power, our happiness is so too: which, if duly considered, is a mighty support under all afflictions from without. For why should we grieve that it is in the power of men, and a thousand adverse accidents, to rob us of our ease and our wealth, our liberty and reputation? God be praised, our main happiness consists not in these things, but in heaven; there lies the treasure of our

hearts and the hope of our lives, of which there is none but ourselves can disappoint us. If we will be happy in the eternal possession of that inexhaustible mine of bliss, we may; and all the hardships and inconveniences we may endure on the way to it, are neither able to obstruct our passage, nor hinder our safe arrival, unless by a base surrender to them we betray ourselves. So that now we may give a bold defiance to all the combining malice of men and devils; and tell them that we will be happy, eternally happy, in despite of the worst they can do to us, seeing the matter wholly depends upon our own courage and resolution, backed and assisted by the never-failing grace of God. There is nothing that men or misfortune can deprive me of, but I can live without, and maintain myself in a happy and glorious post for ever. Why then should I grieve to see my drugs flung overboard, which within a few moments hence will be of no use or value to me, so long as it is in my power to save all my precious and immortal freight, and thereby to secure myself of a most happy and prosperous voyage? Whenever therefore we are threatened with sad contingencies, or with the power or malice of men, we have this answer ready to return to them; God be praised, our main happiness depends not upon you: we can, if we will, go to heaven in despite of you; and when once we are there, we shall be far beyond your reach; and then, *these light afflictions* which you now lay upon us, and *which are but for a moment*, will be found *unworthy to be compared with that eternal glory which shall be revealed to us.* Which consideration, closely applied, and deeply imprinted on our minds, is of sufficient virtue to ease and relieve us under the most

calamitous circumstances; for while our main chance and interest is safe, all is well with us; and then we are secure, none can prejudice us but ourselves.

5. And lastly, Another principle of peace and satisfaction of mind, wherewith our Saviour hath supplied us, is this; that he hath taken care, during his absence from us, to provide for us such supports as are proportionable to every burden he will lay upon us. For so he tells his disciples, when he was departing from them, that it was expedient for them that he should go away; because until he went, according to the divine economy, the Comforter was not to come: *But when I depart*, saith he, *I will send him unto you*, John xvi. 7. And accordingly when he departed, he sent down his holy Spirit to represent himself, and act as his vicegerent in his heavenly kingdom, and to do all that for us which he himself would have done, had he continued personally present with us. So that though now he is a great way off from us in person, yet by his Spirit he is still present with us; present with all that tender affection, and with all those yearning bowels of compassion, that he expressed towards us while he was upon earth. And whereas, had he continued among us in person, he could have been present with us only at such determinate places and distances; he is now present with us wherever we are, in every place, and at every distance, by his immense Spirit; which, like an omnipresent soul diffused through all his mystical body, gives life and motion to every part and particle of it. And having thus taken care to supply his personal absence from us with this divine presence, which is every way extended to the utmost diffusion of his church, we

may depend upon it, that wherever, or in what circumstances soever we are, he is by us and with us, beholding all our needs with a compassionate heart, and ready to extend to us whatever aids and supports we stand in need of. How then can we droop in his blessed presence? How can our hearts sink while he stands by us? What evil is there can scare or distract our minds, whilst we consider that the almighty Spirit of the blessed Jesus, our friend, is always and every where with us, ready bent to stretch forth his helping hand to support us under every oppression? Alas! I am afraid this burden will at length grow too heavy for me; that my strength and courage will at last be forced to yield, and sink underneath it. Well, though you fear your own strength, yet sure you cannot doubt the strength and power of the Spirit of God; and his strength is yours to all necessary purposes, as much as it is his own: and therefore, unless you apprehend your burden to be too heavy for his power as well as yours, you have no reason to dread that you shall sink underneath the weight of it. You are afraid, lest you should be called forth to *suffer for righteousness' sake*, and lest, under the rage and violence of persecution, your faith and constancy should shrink and yield. Why, consider with yourselves, are there not thousands of Christians that have suffered before you, suffered as terrible things as you can possibly dread; and this not only with patience and constancy, but with joy and triumph? Why then should you suspect that blessed Spirit which supported them, to be less able or willing to bear up you? He who hath so often enabled so many tender virgins, delicate matrons, infirm and aged bishops, to sing in the midst

of flames, to smile upon racks, to triumph upon wheels and catastas; and, in short, to endure such long and dolorous martyrdoms, as many times they did, when their tormentors took their turns from morning to night, and plied them with all kinds of cruelties, till many times they were forced to give over, and confess that they had not heart enough to inflict the tortures which those poor sufferers had courage enough to endure: he, I say, who hath thus far enabled them, can he not as well enable you? *Is his arm shortened, that he cannot save? or his ear grown heavy, that he cannot hear* you as well as them? Consider then, you have the same right that they had, by the same never-failing promise, to this his enabling power, which, by so many glorious instances, hath demonstrated itself sufficient to support you under the heaviest oppressions: and therefore you have all the reason in the world to expect the same aids and supports from it, if ever you should be reduced to the same extremities. Our great care therefore ought to be, that we do not desert our Saviour, either by wilful apostasy from his faith, or disobedience to his laws; for so long as we continue faithful to him, he cannot leave and desert us: our main concern ought to be, that we do our part, and not that he doth his; for he cannot fail, though we may. If we prove true to him, we may assuredly depend upon it that he will prove true to us, and not leave us destitute of any help or support that in any condition is necessary for us. If therefore, to serve the wise and holy ends of his providence, he should at any time think it meet to call us to suffer, we may set our hearts at rest upon this assurance, that so long as we take care to maintain our inte-

grity, he must take care to maintain our strength, and not permit us to sink under the burden he lays upon us, for want of any degree of comfort and support that our state and condition requires. Which consideration duly applied, cannot fail of giving a great deal of ease to our anxious and desponding mind.

Having thus shewn at large what abundant provision our Saviour hath made for the peace and satisfaction of our minds, I shall conclude all in a very few words. Our blessed Saviour hath long since told us, that *in this world we shall have trouble; but that in him we shall have peace:* which, though it were more eminently true in those early days of suffering and persecution, doth yet hold most certainly true, not only in times of peace, but even in the most prosperous circumstances of human life. For we cannot but know, that we are dependent upon chance; we cannot but know, that it is in the power of ten thousand contingencies to disturb us; and this, in despite of us, will create a great many anxious thoughts, and vex us with melancholy apprehensions of our futurity. And though at present we may hush them with jollity and mirth, upon the next reflection they will be sure to awake again, and to revenge themselves upon us for those moments of ease we ravished from them; and then, when any evil accident threatens or approaches us, we can give ourselves no certain assurance of escaping it. For when we have done all that lies within the compass of our wisdom and power, there may a thousand crosses arise in our way, which it is impossible for us either to foresee or prevent, and turn our most promising designs upon ourselves, and hasten the

evils upon us by those very means which we choose to prevent it; the sense of which must necessarily cause many a stinging thought to swarm about our minds, and to vex and disturb us in our deepest security.

Thus in our best estate we are poor and indigent creatures, fain to seek abroad, and to go a begging for our happiness from door to door; to depend upon chance, and live insecure of every thing we either possess, or desire, or hope for. And considering how prone we are to be alarmed with the prospect of a sad futurity, and to magnify distant evils in our own apprehensions, and to aggravate present ones by our impatience and despair; and, in a word, to pall our best enjoyments, by expecting more from them than their nature will afford: considering these things, I say, it is the greatest nonsense in the world for men to expect peace and satisfaction of mind from any thing here below. And if we are thus liable to disturbance in our best estate, alas! what are we in our worst! when calamities come rolling upon us, like the waves of the sea, upon the back of one another, and we have no harbour in view to put in at. In this vast tumult of things therefore, whither shall we betake ourselves for tranquillity and peace? If we go into the world, every thing in it tells us, *It is not in me:* if we go out of the world into deserts and solitudes, the stings we shall either find there, or carry thither with us, will soon convince us that it is not in them. Where then can we hope to find peace, but only in Jesus, *the Prince of peace?* To him therefore let us go with an humble faith and obedient will, with a resolved mind to adhere to his truth, and submit to his laws, and wholly to resign

ourselves to his conduct and government. And if in him you do not find all that peace and satisfaction you have hitherto sought in vain, never give credit to any thing that is sacred more. I am sure it is to be found in him, if we wisely, and honestly, and industriously seek it: thousands have found it in him who could find it no where else; and having found it, have enjoyed themselves all their days after in sweet content and peace, and at length have breathed out their souls to him in praises for the happy discovery.

And therefore, if it be not our own fault, we may soon add ourselves to this blessed number, by devoting ourselves to him as they did, and surrendering our lives and interests to his government and disposal. And when once we have performed this with a sincere and resolute intention, we shall by degrees perceive these tempests within us quieted and abated, and our stormy minds clearing up into an happy serenity; and still, as we more and more subdue our wills and affections to him, we shall feel and experience ourselves more and more at ease, until at length we shall arrive to such a settled peace and tranquillity of soul, as that it will be beyond the power of any outward concern to disturb us. And now our mind will be a paradise to itself, a paradise wherein it will be able to live contented and happy, and to breathe calm and gentle thoughts, how tempestuous soever its condition is without. And finding all composed and quiet within, we shall lead a life far more easy, and even, and consistent than ever: for now we shall no longer reserve ourselves to follow fortune and the turns of outward affairs, to comply with all the mutabilities of the wind, and

still to transform ourselves into new shapes, as we are running through the still changing fashions of the world. Now we shall no longer perplex and entangle ourselves by knavish tricks and sordid compliances, by being forced still to study how to act a new part, and to put on a new garb of humour and conversation, upon every new alteration of affairs; but our way will lie even, easy, and direct before us; and whatsoever happens to us from without, whether it rains or shines, proves calm or tempestuous, the inward peace and satisfaction we shall find in following Jesus, by our firm adhering to his truth, and obedience to his laws, will carry us safely through all events, and render us far more happy, even in our persecuted sincerity, than we can reasonably suppose to be in the most prosperous hypocrisy. Wherefore, if ever you intend to be at rest within, and to enjoy yourselves in peace and tranquillity, go to Jesus, *the Prince and author of peace*; take with you words, and say, " O blessed Jesus, hi-
" therto, we confess, *other lords have had dominion*
" *over us*, such as pride and ambition, lust and ava-
" rice; and these have proved unmerciful tyrants to
" us: they have continually harassed and oppressed
" our minds; they have laid waste all our peace,
" stripped and plundered us of our self-enjoyment,
" and almost worn out our lives in perpetual trou-
" bles and anxieties. Wherefore now at last we re-
" turn unto thee, weary and heavy laden, not only
" with guilts, but vexations, resolving for the future
" that thee alone we will serve. O! do not reject
" us, thy oppressed and miserable creatures, who are
" driven unto thee for refuge, from those cruel task-
" masters that have hitherto reigned over us; but

" permit us to spend the remainder of our days un-
" der thy happy government. We know *thy yoke*
" *is easy, and thy burden is light;* and therefore suf-
" fer us now at last, we beseech thee, *to come unto*
" *thee, that in thee we may find rest for our souls,*
" who have sought it in vain in every thing but
" thee." And having thus surrendered up ourselves to him, let us, by our constant perseverance in well-doing, endeavour to subdue ourselves more and more to his will, in this full assurance, that from our hearty and punctual conformity thereunto, we shall reap, not only peace and tranquillity here, but also immortal glory and happiness hereafter. *Which we beseech thee to grant us all, of thy infinite mercy, O blessed Jesu: to whom, with thy great Father, and eternal Spirit, be ascribed of us and all the world, all honour, and glory, and praise, from this time forth and for evermore. Amen.*

DISCOURSE XI.

UPON

JAMES I. 8.

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

BY *a double minded man* here, we are to understand (as is plain from the context) an insincere man; one who pretends to religion, and hath a good inclination towards it, but is not arrived to a firm and prevailing resolution of adhering to it, maugre all temptations to the contrary; that bears some faint and ineffectual regard to the rules of his duty and the dictates of his conscience, but not such as hath the superiority over him, and doth command and govern his life and conversation; not such as hath that prevailing influence upon him, as to hinder him from being ordinarily counterswayed by his appetites or passions, or secular interests, to the commission of unlawful and irregular actions. So that the single-minded man is one, who hath no other prevailing purpose and resolution, but to adhere to God in the profession and practice of true religion; and upon every emergency is ready fixed to perform what God demands of him, by the voice of revelation and right reason; and, in a word, that lives under no other commanding principle but this, I will always do what God will have me: and so on the contrary, the *double minded man* is one that fluctuates between two minds and wills; a will for God, and a will for the world; and is governed sometimes by one, and some-

times by another, but is never true or constant to either. In short, he is one who, being yet unsubdued to the commanding power and influence of religion, hath no fixed, no determined mind or resolution; but is not only of several minds upon several occasions, but also of contrary minds upon contrary occasions. For his heart is so divided between his God and his interest, his duty and his lust, that, like a needle between two loadstones, he is always wavering to and again, and pointing alternately to both, but is never fixed to either. And of this man the apostle tells us, that *he is unstable in all his ways.* Where by *ways*, according to the Hebrew phraseology, he means *actions*; he *is unstable in all his* actions; that is, he always acts with an anxious, doubtful, and misgiving mind; he knows not where to find himself, nor many times which way to turn himself; he leads a very uncertain, insecure, and unquiet life; being all along perplexed and entangled in the whole course of his actions. The words thus explained may be resolved into this proposition:

That whilst men's minds are divided between God and their lusts, and are not entirely subdued to his will, they must necessarily lead very anxious, insecure, unstable lives; that till such time as we act from an entire submission of our souls to God, we can never act steadily and securely; but must be always fluctuating in great anxiety and uncertainty.

The Wise Man tells us, that *he that walketh uprightly walketh surely*, Prov. x. 9. he goes on in a direct, secure, and even course of action, wherein there is no perplexity or entanglement: whereas the life of a *double minded* hypocrite, whose heart is divided between God and the world, is a perpetual

maze and labyrinth; wherein the farther he goes, the more he is lost and confounded. And this will evidently appear upon the following considerations:

1. That he acts upon no fixed or certain principles.

2. That the way and course of his actions is all obscure and intricate.

3. That he is always fain to live in a disguise, and is therein insecure of concealment.

4. That he is always at odds with himself, and in perpetual variance with his own reason.

5. That he is at a miserable uncertainty as to the present events and issues of his own actions.

6. That he hath a most dismal prospect before him of the final issue and event of all.

1. The *double minded man* acts upon no fixed or certain principles. For the principles he proceeds upon are such as have no foundation in the nature of things; but, like castles in the air, are built upon mere dreams and delusions, which, whenever his reason awakes, will sink and disappear. For either he lives upon no principles at all, but acts, like the beasts that perish, upon blind instincts, and the unaccountable impulses of his brutal sense: or upon such principles as these; that there is no such Being in the world as an eternal, and invisible, almighty power; or that if there be, he lives retired from us, and takes no notice of what we do; or that if he doth, it is as an unconcerned spectator, to whom it is purely indifferent whether we do good or evil; or that if he be at all pleased with our good deeds, and displeased with our bad, yet it is not to any such degree, as to entail any future rewards upon the one, or punishments on the other; or that if there be any

such rewards and punishments prepared by him, they are so slight and inconsiderable, that the loss of the one and sufferance of the other are abundantly compensated by the present pleasure of a sinful life; or, in fine, that if neither the one nor the other prove true, yet we may securely enjoy these pleasures while we are able; and by repenting at last, when we are old or dying, and are able to enjoy them no longer, may entitle ourselves to those rewards, whatsoever they are, and secure ourselves from those punishments. This is the chain of principles upon which bad men live and act, if they act upon any at all; and which are all of them grounded upon such doubtful presumptions, such thin pretences, and unsatisfactory reasonings, as no man in his wits can ever be throughly secure of. For besides that they contradict the best and wisest part of the world, the current sense of human nature, and the common consent of all mankind, which are such prejudices against them as must necessarily render them very doubtful at least; besides all this, I say, they have so strong a current of evidence against them, and are overpowered with such a force of arguments from all the quarters of reason and religion; and the contrary principles are so much more agreeable to all the appearances of things, to the sacred oracles, to human society, and to the very frame of human nature; and, in a word, have every way so vast an overweight of reason on their side, that it is impossible for any man in a cold mind to be confident that they are true, how much soever it may be his interest to wish them so. So that whereas the sincere and upright man, living, as he doth, upon well-tried principles, that for their truth have been always found most

agreeable to reason, and for their usefulness, always approved by constant experience, treads firmly and boldly, being secure of the ground he goes upon; the *double minded* hypocrite, being all along uncertain of the grounds of his action, walks like a benighted traveller in a dangerous road, where he is fain to feel out his way, and to tread tenderly and cautiously, lest his next step should be into a bog or a precipice. And so long as he is insecure of the principles upon which he acts, he can never be secure that he acts safely. He knows that if the principles he goes upon prove false, he is undone; and whether they will prove so or no he is at best uncertain; and so through the whole course of his sin and life, he walks with an anxious and misgiving mind, and goes trembling on between hope and fear to the final issue and event, which, for all he knows, may prove such as will put an end to all his hopes for ever. For, maugre all his confidence, he cannot be sure but that when he dies he may find all the principles he acts on baffled by a woful experience; he may then feel that there is a God to whom vengeance belongs, and an eternal life of rewards and punishments; and if he should, how would it blank and amaze him to find himself, instead of being reduced to an insensible substance, landed on a strange inhospitable shore, inhabited with ghastly furies and miserable ghosts, and shut up with them by a vast surrounding gulf in everlasting horror and despair? And therefore, seeing he can have no security, but that such may be the fatal close of his sinful life, he must, whenever he coolly reflects, be miserably anxious and uneasy, and expect the mighty event with dread and dire abodings.

2. The way and course of *a double minded man's* actions is all obscure and intricate. For whereas the course of an honest upright man is for the main of it chalked out to his hands, both by divine revelation, and the natural and eternal reasons of things, and that so plainly and clearly, that as soon as he opens his eyes he may easily discern it, without any great reach of wit or depth of judgment; the rule of his actions being open and direct, without any dark subtilties, or intricate windings and turnings: the false pretending hypocrite lives in a maze, wherein, having no certain rule to go by, he is very often at a loss which way to direct himself. For having forsaken the plain paths which God hath described to him, he is put upon inventing a way for himself, of studying his own steps, and groping to his end through a labyrinth of popular errors and mistakes; in which he is oftentimes so lost and bewildered, that he knows neither where he is, nor whither to go next; and sometimes the way that he takes lies quite cross to his ends, and sometimes leads him about in such a wide compass, that by that time he arrives at them, they are not worth his travel; and even when he thinks himself most in the right, and goes on with the fullest assurance, time and chance many times cast up so many difficulties and perplexing incurrences in his way, as to puzzle all his wit and contrivance how to break through them. Thus, when men leave God's way, which is a plain, a sure, and infallible one, and commit themselves to the conduct of their own blind wills and shortsighted reason, they forsake the light of the sun to follow a night-fire, which, instead of conducting them in the plain and direct way, carries them at random

about in the dark, leads them hither and thither, backwards and forwards, over hedges and ditches, through breaks and bogs, till they are lost and mazed in their own wanderings. While they walk in God's way, they have God's wisdom for their guide, which cannot mislead them; there they have nothing to do but to follow the easy directions of an infallible mind, to receive his commands, and to obey them; there they are free from all the trouble of forming new resolutions, and inventing new measures of action upon new emergencies; there they see their way plainly described to them; and are resolved once for all to pursue it through all events, without any further pause or deliberation; being fully satisfied in themselves, that it is much safer for them to follow God's will, which acts from infinite goodness, by infinite wisdom, with infinite power, than to follow their own, which they know, by woful experience, is so liable to be imposed upon by false shows and appearances; and to mistake poison for physic, and evil for good. Thus while they are in God's way, they find all things direct, and plain, and easy to them; but when they divert into their own, there they have nothing to guide them but a vain, foolish mind, that is easily tricked and imposed upon, and a blind appetite, that is conducted by a roving imagination; there they are fain to live by their wits upon extemporary shifts and evasions, and still to invent new ways upon new occasions, and to wander about in a mysterious labyrinth of little tricks and contrivances; which, instead of extricating them out of the difficulties of life, do commonly but more and more perplex and entangle them. And hence, as *the path of the just* is in scripture described to be as

the shining light, Proverbs iv. 18. to have *nothing froward or perverse in them*, and to be *plain to him that understandeth*, Proverbs viii. 8, 9. and to be an *even place*, where *none of his steps shall slide*, Psalm xxvi. 12. compared with xxxvii. 31. so on the other side, *the paths of the wicked* are said to be *dark and crooked*, Proverbs ii. 13, 15. and to be uneven *and slippery*, Jeremiah xxiii. 12. And in such a way as this, how is it possible for a man to walk firmly and stably?

3. The *double minded man* is always fain to live in a disguise, and is therein very insecure of concealment: and this also renders him *unstable in all his ways*. Though, considering what a false and ill-natured world we live in, it is many times an honest and necessary prudence for a man to reserve his mind, and not proclaim even his fairest intentions in every one's ear with whom he converses. But for a man to live in continual disguise, and always look one way, and row another; to counterfeit, and dissemble, and mask his real intentions with contrary appearances, is a very uneasy way of living: for there is twice the difficulty in every thing that he aims and drives at, as there is in an honest and above-board procedure. Here, honest ends are pursued by direct means, without need of any colour or artifice; whereas there, commonly more art is required to justify the means, than to manage them, and to dissemble the ends, than to obtain them. For whilst the ends a man proposes be foul and dishonest, he must, in his own defence, pretend quite contrary to his own intentions; and to form and manage his pretensions so artificially, as to conceal his bad intentions under them, till they are executed,

is commonly the greatest difficulty in the execution of them. For though men may be foolish enough, yet they are not good-natured enough, to be always imposed upon by fair pretences; their very ill-nature makes them jealous and suspicious; and their jealousy and suspicion makes them prying and inquisitive. And what a deal of art must it require for a man to conceal himself, and carry on his ill aims with any plausible colour, when he hath so many jealous and inquisitive eyes upon him? And then for a man to dissemble is an outrage to himself; it is to act against the grain of his own nature, by making an outward show and appearance of that which he inwardly hates. For while a man pretends to be that which he is not, he must seem in his actions to be that which he is most averse to; and all the while he doth so he thwarts himself, and acts directly contrary to his own inclinations. If his wicked aims did not force him to hide himself, while he is making a formal show of mortification, he would much rather be satiating his hungry lusts; while he is hanging down his head like a bulrush, to disguise his pride and ambition, he would much rather be strutting, insulting, and domineering; while he is giving his alms *to be seen of men*, he would much rather be grinding and oppressing the poor; and whilst, in order to his devouring widows' houses, he is making long prayers, he would much rather be glutting his avarice with the spoil. So that all the while he pretends to be the contrary to what he is, he must practise the contrary to what he is inclined; and while he doth so, he offers a perpetual force and violence to himself. Now what uneasy way of living must this be, for a man to be always studying how

water, will be continually struggling, till either the one is quenched or the other evaporated. The will will not let the conscience be quiet, nor the conscience the will; and so those two commanding powers of our souls will live in perpetual variance, and admit of no other intercourse but mutual violences and outrages, till either the one is extinguished or the other subdued. Whilst therefore a man's mind is double and divided, his soul is in a state of war; there being two irreconcileable parties perpetually struggling within his breast, a law in his mind fighting against the law in his members, his reason against his appetite, his conscience against his will, so that he can take neither part without doing violence to himself. If he sides with his conscience, he outrages his will; if he sides with his will, he forces his conscience; if he take part with his appetite, he makes war against his reason; if he complies with his reason, he bids defiance to his appetite. Thus, which way soever he determines himself, he is sure to determine against one part of himself: and it can never be otherwise, till one of these adverse parts of himself are subdued, and his double mind is reduced to a single one. When he hath but one mind, whether it be a good or a bad one, he will be at peace and unity with himself; but before he can have one good mind, he must form a good resolution, and follow it, till he hath entirely subdued his will and appetite to his reason and conscience; and then the intestine war will conclude in a happy peace: and so on the contrary, before he can have one bad mind, he must abandon himself to all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and continually drink in iniquity, as the horse drinks in water, till

he hath intoxicated his reason with it, and stupified his conscience: and then the intestine struggle will conclude in a lethargic quiet and insensibility: but to arrive at this, is far more difficult than it is to acquire the former; for while a man contends with his reason and conscience, he contends with his original nature; and to vanquish that, is far more difficult than to subdue his wicked will and inordinate appetite, which are but his acquired nature; and consequently doth not so inseparably adhere to him, nor is so inveterate. But till his conscience and his reason are entirely vanquished, they will be struggling and contending; and whilst they do so, he will be continually at odds and variance with himself. He must act all along with a self-condemning mind, and be content to endure the reproaches of his reason, and the clamours of his conscience; and while he doth so, he can never act steadily and securely. For whilst his reason, which is to be his guide, is dissatisfied with his way, it is impossible for him to walk on without diffidence and anxiety; at every step he must tread with distrust, and proceed with a trembling heart, lest the ground should sink under him; and while he thus walks with a misgiving conscience, and an ill-aboding mind, it is impossible but he must be *unstable in all his ways*.

4. He is at a miserable uncertainty as to the present event and issue of his actions. He knows, or at least he shrewdly suspects, that there is a wise and all-seeing, a just and almighty Providence, that overrules all causes and disposes of all events; and without which there is nothing can succeed, how wisely soever it is designed and projected. He knows, that in this superintending power of Provi-

dence, there is an essential goodness and rectitude of nature, which invariably inclines it to love and bless goodness and righteousness, and to hate and curse their contraries, in whomsoever it finds them: and being thus persuaded, he cannot but conclude himself insecure, whilst he either aims at unjust ends, or uses unjust means to obtain them, both the one and the other being infinitely odious to that overruling power upon which his success depends. For he must either imagine, that the most probable way to oblige this power to succeed him, is to brave and hector it into a fawning compliance with his wishes, than which there is nothing more absurd and unreasonable; or be at least infinitely jealous and suspicious, that the wicked courses he takes will, instead of obliging it to prosper them, arm its vengeance against them, and provoke it to determine them in some dire event. For if God hath the disposal of all events, whether good or evil, it is certainly every whit as reasonable a project for a man to drink deadly poison to obtain his health, or to commit high treason to escape hanging, as to endeavour to obtain any good, or to escape any evil, by such courses as God hates and abhors. For if the way to obtain his favour is to please him, and the way to please him is to do what is pleasing to him, as most certainly it is, then it is as evident as any proposition in the mathematics, that he who endeavours by such courses as he knows are displeasing to him, to obtain any good, or avoid any evil with[in] God's disposal, uses the most contrary means to effect his ends, and only spends his pains to thwart and countermine himself. The *double minded man* therefore, being conscious of himself that he hath

rendered God his enemy, can never be reasonably secure in his own mind of obtaining any good, or escaping any evil that is in God's disposal. For though to serve the wise ends of his providence, God many times gratifies bad men, and gives them their own heart's desire, yet for them to expect any good at his hands, whilst the whole course of their actions is a continued provocation of him, is the most unreasonable presumption in the world; it is to suppose him not only insensible of affronts and injuries, but also fond of them, pleased and delighted with them to that degree, as to own himself obliged to crown and reward them with his favours; for unless it be this, there is nothing they can fancy in the nature of God that can incline him to be kind to them. While therefore they are in pursuit of any good, or in flight from any evil, if any wise thought should arise in their mind concerning the event, it must be very anxious and desponding. There is such a good in my view, which I would fain enjoy, and am resolved to use my utmost endeavour to compass; but, alas! it is in the disposal of God, who is the sovereign arbitrator of my fate; and unless he will be so kind as to award it to me, my utmost skill and conduct in the prosecution of it will prove insignificant. But how can I hope that he will succeed my design, who hath so many reasons to be my mortal enemy; and if he will not, he hath ten thousand accidents under his command, by any one of which he can baffle and defeat me; and if he should gratify my desire, I have no reason to believe that it is out of kindness; and if it be not, instead of a blessing, it will prove a curse to me. There is such an evil hangs over me, that I would fain escape, and

am resolved to employ my utmost care and industry to prevent it: but when I have done all, it is in the hand of God, whose vengeance I have armed against me by a thousand provocations; and if he will bring it upon me, (which I have too much cause to fear,) he can do it by those very means whereby I am endeavouring to prevent it. And if he should succeed my endeavours, I have just ground to suspect that it would be in displeasure to me; and then it will prove but the removal of a less evil to make way for a greater. Thus, if he truly reason with himself concerning the events of his own actions, it must create in him infinite despondence and anxiety. And whilst a man thus lives in fear of the event, it will be impossible for him to act with any steadiness or security. This therefore is the case of the *double minded man*, who being conscious to himself that all events are in God's disposal, whom he hath so many ways provoked to be his enemy, must necessarily act with a dubious and trembling mind, being so uncertain within himself whether that which he is doing will issue in his benefit or bane.

6. And lastly, He hath a most dismal prospect before him of the final issue and event of all. Whenever he casts his eyes beyond this present scene of things, wherein his mind is tossed to and fro in such infinite uncertainties; there he sees nothing but dismal horror and tragedy, nothing but darkness, wretchedness, and despair; nothing but famine to his appetites, anguish to his mind, and torment to his conscience; nothing to accompany him but devils and damned ghosts; nothing to entertain him but horrible thoughts and dire reflections: which woful prospect, if he hath not outsinned all sense,

must necessarily alarm all his fears, and strike his very soul into an agony. And when a man thus feels his present state bad, and foresees that the future will be ten thousand times worse, he must be a perfect sot or a miserable wretch. Whilst he is walking through this short enclosure of time here, at every step he feels himself pricked and torn by his own cares, and fears, and anxieties, which, like briers and thorns, grow up round about him; and when he looks over the pale, into a vast field of eternity, there he sees nothing but dire and horrid spectacles, nothing but burning wrath and vengeance attending to persecute him to eternal ages. So that whether he looks backwards or forwards, or but just before him, his eyes can find nothing but uncomfortable objects. That which is past is all tasteless and insipid; that which is present, is mostly nauseous and unpalatable; but that which is to come, is all dire and intolerable: and this is the sting of his misery. Were his past or present circumstances far worse than they are, they were easy to be borne in the prospect of a more comfortable futurity; but when this is worse, ten thousand times worse, than the worst of what is either past or present, for a man to pass through all these sad things together with any patience or content, requires the hardiness and insensibility of a stone. It is sad enough, God knows, to walk through the cares, and fears, and disquietudes which naturally attend a false and double mind; but to walk through all these within full view of hell, and at every step to perceive one's self approaching nearer and nearer to it, is to pass through a most dismal expectation to a more dismal experience, which is doubtless the most woful con-

dition that human life can be exposed to. And yet this is the condition of the *double minded man*, who acts his sin with an expectation of suffering eternally for it, and robs within sight of the place of execution. And when, with that Persian judge, he is thus condemned to sit out all his days with the sword of eternal vengeance hanging over him by a frail thread of life, which is every moment in danger of breaking, how is it possible he should enjoy himself in any tolerable degree of peace and security of mind! Doubtless, if he hath any sense of danger, the foresight of so great a one as this, of being miserable for ever, must necessarily create in him a proportionable fear and anxiety, and consequently render him very *unstable in all his ways*.

What then remains, but that, seeing the state of hypocrites and double minded men is so wretched, and miserable, and insecure, we all of us from henceforth resolve, as we tender our own ease and quiet, to lay aside all hypocrisy and double-dealing, and act through the remaining part of our lives with plainness, integrity, and simplicity of mind. Of which way of living, if you would once be persuaded to make a thorough experiment, I dare engage, you would find it abundantly more secure, and easy, and comfortable, than that which you have hitherto pursued. And to convince you of the truth of this, I will crave leave in a few words to represent to you the reverse of the double minded man's life, and to shew you the opposite advantages of living honestly and uprightly.

1. He who lives uprightly goes upon firm and stanch principles, such as these; that there is a God that governs the world, that inspects all the thoughts

and actions of men, and will reward or punish them with eternal happiness or misery: which, being founded upon as full evidence as the nature of the thing will bear, and attested by the inmost sense of human nature, by the consent of wise men of all ages, nations, and religions, and, in short, by the unanimous vote of mankind, are such as will endure the test of our severest reason, and give ample satisfaction of their truth to the most inquisitive minds. The upright man, therefore, proceeding upon such principles as these, treads upon firm ground, which he is secure will never sink under him; and, which is more, if it should, will in the end leave him in as good condition as those who proceed upon the contrary principles. For whereas if their principles prove false, their acting upon them will prove their eternal ruin; if his should prove so, he will live more at ease for them, more suitably to his nature, and more satisfied with himself; and when he dies, he will only be left in the same condition with them, in a state of eternal sleep and insensibility. So that if his principles should prove false, he can never be the worse for acting upon them; but if they should prove true, he will be infinitely the better. And it is a vast security to the mind to proceed upon such principles, as, if they prove false, will leave us safe and at rest; and if they prove true, will leave us eternally happy.

2. The upright man walks in a plain, easy, and direct way. Those eternal tracts of righteousness and goodness wherein he walks, are so plainly characterised upon his heart and conscience by the finger of God, and described and inculcated in the divine oracles with so bright a sunbeam, that if he

honestly inquire, he cannot miss them; and when he hath found them, he cannot easily swerve from them. For whereas wickedness is a boundless wilderness, whose paths do all thwart and cross one another;—all vices consisting in extremes, which are direct contraries, and being either the defects or excesses of some virtue; so that there are not only two vices to every one virtue, but both are extremes running counter to one another;—the paths of virtue lie straight forward between these vicious extremes, and, like parallel lines, never interfere. So that here a man may walk on safely without any great reach of wit, or laborious diligence of inquiry, and needs do no more than follow Solomon's direction: *Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left*, Prov. iv. 25. 27. Here, according to the prophet, is *an highway, called The way of holiness; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein*, Isaiah xxxv. 8. And having so plain and direct a way before him, he needs neither tire himself in the search of it, nor rack his brains with any anxious deliberations in the choice of it, nor grate his mind with scruples and galling regrets in the pursuit of it; but may always find it with ease, and follow it with security.

3. The upright man acts openly without fear of discovery: for being conscious to himself, both that his intentions are clear, and his prosecutions of them fair and honest, he could be well enough content that he had a window into his breast, that all the world might see through him. He knows that his thoughts and actions are such as will endure sounding, and bear sifting to the bottom; and therefore takes no care to

disguise himself in false shows and appearances. For he who can reflect upon himself with satisfaction and complacency, may look all the world in the face with confidence and assurance; as knowing that the more curiously he is watched, and the more exactly scanned, the more highly he shall be approved by all that are wise and good. And though his reputation may for a while be clouded by malice or mistake, yet he is fully satisfied that one time or other the very light of things will scatter these mists, and clear these misprisions, and that then he shall shine the brighter for being overcast. And being thus satisfied, he walks openly through the world with a bare face, and in the sight of the sun, having no occasion to skulk into coverts and retirements.

4. The upright man lives in peace with himself, and in an amicable accord with his own reason and conscience. For he who follows his reason and makes [takes?] his conscience for his guide, (as every upright man doth,) can neither be reproached by the one, nor condemned by the other; and having to all his aims and actions the full approbation of his reason and conscience, in reiterated echoes resounding after him, he hath always good weather within, and a clear sky about him; wherein his mind breathes none but calm and wholesome thoughts, and hath a hopeful confidence and a cheerful satisfaction in every thing he doth, as being agreeable to his own reason, conformable to his duty, and worthy of himself. And being thus crowned with the applauses of his own conscience, he goes on through all the difficulties of life with alacrity and courage, having nothing from within to countermand or control him, no sting of remorse for what he hath done, nor check or struggling

against what he is doing; nothing to pull him back from his way, or to cause him to halt in it, or any way to disturb and distract him in his motion. And when at any time he is balked and defeated in any of his honest designs and prosecutions, he goes on with an exact mind under the disappointment, triumphing in the integrity of his heart and the innocence of his procedure; having a paradise within him, where he lives at ease, and enjoys himself in serenity and peace, let things be never so stormy and tempestuous without.

5. The upright man is secure of the good issues and events of his honest aims and prosecutions: not that he is confident that things shall always succeed according to his present aims and desires; but this he is sure of, that they shall always succeed as God would have them, who is wiser than he, and loves him better than he loves himself. He is satisfied with this, that God will never cross him but for very good reasons; such reasons, as if himself did fully comprehend, would make him heartily wish that God in his tender mercy would cross and disappoint him: and living under this persuasion, he is secure in his own mind, that he shall either have what he desires, or something better in exchange. He builds upon this, that if what he is projecting be good for him, it shall certainly succeed according to his wishes; but that whether it be good for him or no, God knows better than he, and therefore, if it doth not succeed, it is well for him that it doth not; because God certainly knew that it was not good for him that it should: and to be disappointed of those hopes which he fancies are good for him, is a thousand times more for his interest than to be gratified; which, God

knows, will be hurtful to him; because he is certain, both that he may be mistaken, and that God cannot. Wherefore, let the worst that can arrive, (or that which through his blindness and folly he esteems the worst,) this he depends upon, that matters being rightly stated, he shall in the issue of things come off very well, so as to be a gainer in the foot of the account; and being thus persuaded, his mind is not harassed, like other men's, with anxious thoughts concerning the event; but let what will happen, he goes on with a calm and satisfied mind, and embraces his fortune with satisfaction and complacency.

6. And lastly, He hath a fair and glorious prospect before him of the issue and events of all. The sense of his own integrity and uprightness hath raised him to a glorious hope, whereon he stands, like Moses on the top of Pisgah, surveying the heavenly Canaan, whose fruitful soil abounds with every good, and flows with everlasting pleasure: from whence with joyful eyes he sees the happy period of his tedious march through this barren wilderness of life; he sees the blissful mansions and abodes that the God of love hath prepared to receive him; he sees them most richly furnished with all the delights that his vast hungry desires can crave or swallow to eternal ages; he sees that there is nothing but a short momentary death, that, like the river Jordan, separates this wilderness from that heavenly land; and that as soon as ever he hath passed and forded this, his travel will conclude in endless rest and pleasure, in the accomplishment of all his hopes, and the full satisfaction of all his wishes. With the prospective of his faith and hope he beholds the *illustrious orders of angels, the*

glorious company of apostles, the goodly fellowship of prophets, the noble army of martyrs, with crowns of glory and blessedness on their heads, beckoning to him from the farther shore to make haste thither, and come into the joyous participation of their society and happiness. The sight of all which glorious things inspires his heart with such an addition of new life and vigour, as carries him on with cheerfulness and alacrity through all the weary stages of his life; for he who walks with heaven in his eye, is a thousand times happier in his expectation, than if he had all the goods this world affords in his possession. The upright man, therefore, having this blessed expectation before him, he goes on with a bold and secure mind, and in his course *is steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as he knows that his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* Seeing therefore the vast advantages integrity and uprightness hath of double-dealing, as we tender our own ease and security, let us all study for the future to lead the remainder of our lives in exact sincerity and simplicity of heart; which will not only extricate us from the greatest difficulties and perplexities of this present life, but also crown us with immortal ease and happiness in the life to come. *Which God of his infinite mercy grant; to whom be honour, and glory, and praise, from this time forth and for ever. Amen.*

DISCOURSE XII.

UPON

1 JOHN V. 3.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

IN the first verse the apostle asserts, that *whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ*, that is, so believes as to act suitable to his belief, *is born of God*; he is become a child of God by partaking of his nature, and stamped with his likeness; and *every one that loveth him that begat*, i. e. God his heavenly Father, *loveth him also that is begotten of him*; hath a true hearty kindness for all that are God's children. And then in the second verse, *By this*, saith he, *we know that we love the children of God*, and consequently, that we are *born of God*, *if we love God, and keep his commandments*; that is, if we so love him as to keep his commandments. And indeed if we do not so love him, we do not love him at all, and consequently we do not love his children, nor are we his children ourselves, of which he gives a full proof in the text; *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

In which words you have, first, an account of the love of God, what it is; *This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments*; and, secondly, a motive to engage us to the practice of it, *and his commandments are not grievous.*

I begin with the first of these, the account of this

love of God, and it is, *This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.* By *the love of God* here, we are not to understand God's love to us, but our love to God; as is plain by this, because it is placed in our keeping his commandments. *This is the love of God*; that is, this is the natural effect and proper exercise of the love of God: for it is certain, that keeping God's commandments is not the affection of love to him, but the effect of it. So that the meaning of the words is this; This is the most genuine expression and inseparable effect of our love of God, that we obey his laws. And hence our Saviour makes this the proper trial and proof of our love to him, *If ye love me, keep my commandments*, John xiv. 15. For this, he tells us, verse 23, is the necessary consequence of our love to him; *If any man love me, he will keep my words*; i. e. This will most certainly be the effect of his love to me, that he will be obedient to my will. And by this, he plainly tells us, he will judge of the sincerity of our friendship to him, John xv. 14. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* From all which it is evident, that the most proper and characteristical expression of our love to God is our keeping his commandments.

And indeed, considering that God is our sovereign lawgiver, there are no actions by which we can so naturally express our affection to him, as by those of obedience and submission to his laws: and therefore we find in scripture, that to love God and obey his laws, and to hate God and disobey them, are generally used promiscuously for one another, and that for very good reason; for here our love and hatred of God are not considered as conversant about God

as God, (in which sense perhaps there is no creature in the world can be said to hate him,) but as conversant about him as Lord and Governor of the world; as he gives laws to mankind, whereby he commands them what to do, and forbids them what to avoid. And in this sense, to love God, is to love him as governing and commanding; and as such, we can no otherwise express our love to him, but by keeping his commandments. But for the further clearing of this, I shall in prosecution of the argument do these two things:

I. Shew you that whensoever the love of God is, it will most certainly prove a principle of obedience to him.

II. That the love of God is in itself the most perfect and effectual principle of obedience.

I. That whensoever the love of God is, it will most certainly prove a principle of obedience to him. And this, I doubt not, will evidently appear, if we consider, that all the natural expressions of our love, as it is terminated upon God, do of their own accord finally resolve themselves into obedience to his will. For love, wherensoever it is hearty and sincere, always expresses itself in such symptoms as these:

1. In industriously endeavouring to resemble the beloved.

2. In conforming the will, designs, and intentions, to the will, and designs, and intentions of the beloved.

3. In a solicitous care of avoiding those things which may any ways displease or distaste the beloved.

4. In a cheerful readiness to undergo any thing, be it never so hard or difficult, for the sake of the beloved. All which expressions of our love, when it

is terminated upon God, do most naturally run into obedience to his will.

If we love God, our love will express itself in endeavouring to resemble him. For every man esteems what he loves to be lovely; and we naturally wish, that that were in ourselves which we esteem to be lovely in another; that so being like him, we may appear as lovely in his eyes as he doth in ours. And so, if we love God, we must necessarily esteem him exceeding lovely and amiable; and that which we esteem and love as lovely in him, we cannot but wish for and desire in ourselves, out of a natural affection of loveliness: and that he may have the same reason to love us as we have to love him, we must needs desire to resemble him in all those amiable things that do endear him to us. But how those beauties in God being all of them only moral, which are the immediate objects of our love to him, are capable of being transcribed by imitation, and made ours by copying and writing after them in our actions; so that if we heartily desire to partake of them, our desire will necessarily engage us to imitate them. For how can we be said heartily to desire that good which we may have, but will take no care to acquire? And confess, did we love him for his eternity, or his power, or his immensity, we might wish to be like him, but all in vain; because in these perfections we are not capable of imitating him. But the beauties for which we love him, are his goodness, and wisdom, and righteousness, and mercy, and the like; all which being imitable by us, we may, if we please, derive into ourselves, and transcribe into our own natures. So that if we love God, we must necessarily desire to resemble him in these things for

which we love him; and those things being all of an imitable nature, our desire of resembling him will oblige and excite us to a careful and constant imitation of him. But now to obey God, and to imitate him in those moral perfections for which we love him, are one and the same thing. Thus, when I obey God in being universally just and righteous towards himself and all his creation, I imitate him in that essential justice and equity of his nature, which is the eternal rule of all his actions. When I obey him in doing good to all that are within the reach of my charity, I imitate him in the overflowing bounty and unlimited goodness of his nature. In a word, when I obey him in forgiving those that injure me, I imitate him in his boundless mercy and readiness to forgive offenders. And in fine, all our obedience is comprehended in being pure as he is pure, and holy as he is holy; in being good as he is good, just as he is just, merciful as he is merciful; for though the acts and expressions of these moral perfections in us are in many instances different from what they are in God, by reason of that difference of natures, relations, and circumstances that there is between him and us; yet the perfections in general are of the same kind in him and us, though the particular expressions of them are various, by reason of those accidental differences. For though he doth not do all those particular actions which he requires of us, and consequently we, in doing those actions, cannot be said to imitate God in the general, in doing those actions which he himself would have done, had he had our natures, and been in our relations and circumstances. Thus God doth not pray, because he hath none superior to him; nor humble

himself, because he is infinitely great and perfect; nor practise chastity and temperance, because he is a pure spirit, and hath no commerce with bodily affections; and consequently we, in doing of these actions, cannot be said to imitate the same actions in God, because he doth not the same. But he constantly doth whatsoever is reasonable for him to do as God, and as governor of the world; and never varies in the least punctilio from the eternal rules of equity and goodness; by which he gives a glorious example unto all his reasonable creatures, to excite both angels and men to do what is fit and reasonable for them in their several states and relations: and what is reasonable for us men to do, he hath declared to us in his laws; so that by obeying his laws we imitate God in the general, by doing what is reasonable for us; though what is reasonable for God and us, whose natures and relations are so different, be not the same in all particular instances: so that in general, you see, to obey and imitate God, is but the same thing in other words. Wherefore, since the love of God doth necessarily include a desire of resembling him, and that desire necessarily produces a constant and vigorous imitation of him, and that imitation is all one with obeying him; it hence necessarily follows, that if our love of him be sincere, it must finally resolve to obedience. For how can I love God, and not think him lovely? How can I think him lovely, and not desire to be like him? How can I desire to be like him, and not take care to imitate him? And how else can I imitate him, but by obeying him?

2. If we love God, our love will conform our wills, designs, and intentions to the will, designs, and in-

tentions of God. For love always unites the will of the lover to the will of the beloved: and if it be mutual, it twists them together into one will, and confounds all their discords into a perfect harmony; because love doth necessarily conclude in it benevolence, which consists in an unfeigned will that all may go well with him whom we love; that he may enjoy every good that he wills, and accomplish every desire, design, and intention, so far as it is good and reasonable for him. So that supposing that the beloved be but his own friend, that he wills and pursues nothing but what is good and grateful to him; the lover, as such, ought necessarily to conspire with him in the same will, and designs, and pursuits. If therefore we heartily love God, we cannot but will what he wills, and design and intend what he intends and designs; every motion of that first great mover will be an effectual law to govern all our motions; and our wills, and desires, and designs, and intentions, like the lesser wheels of an automaton, will presently run at the first impulse of the great master-wheel, without the least rub or hesitation; and in despite of all the contentions of a rebellious flesh, and all the counter-strivings of a perverse ungovernable heart, our love will so captivate our wills to God's, that between him and us there will be but one will, and end, and interest. And our wills being thus subjected to him by the invincible necessity of love, all our inferior powers, like smaller garrisons, when the master-fort is taken, will presently surrender of their own accord. For no man can be a rebel to God, whether he will or no; because the will is the commanding principle, and hath such an absolute empire over all our actions, that it is impossible for us to do what

he [we] will not. So that if we will and design what God wills and designs, our practice must necessarily be conformable to his will, so far as we know and understand it: for as God's will gives law to ours, so our will gives law to our actions; and so by consequence, the will of God must be the sovereign law whereby both are regulated and determined. From hence therefore it is evident, that if we sincerely love God, we shall will as he wills; and that, if we will as he wills, we shall act as he would have us: and therefore, for any man to say that he loves God, while he wills contrary to his will, or that his will is reconciled to God's, while he acts contrary to his commands, is gross hypocrisy and deep dissimulation: for as the love of God resolves necessarily into an union of wills with him, so that union of wills resolves necessarily into obedience to his laws.

3. If we love God, that love will express itself in a solicitous care of avoiding every thing that may displease or distaste him. For the greatest ambition of love, is to appear lovely and amiable in the eyes of its beloved; and that it may do so, it doth most studiously avoid whatsoever may be displeasing or distasteful to it, and most industriously endeavours to adorn itself with all those obliging graces that are apt to endear and recommend it. And so if we love God, we cannot but desire to be lovely in his eyes; and that desire, if it be sincere and hearty, must necessarily engage us to an endeavour of acquiring whatsoever is amiable and pleasing, and of avoiding whatsoever is hateful and grievous to him. But now virtue and true goodness are the only beauties to endear us to God, and render us lovely in his eyes; and sin and wickedness the only deformities for which

he hates and abhors us; for his love and hatred are not regulated like ours, by the unaccountable impulses of a mutable fancy, but by steady and eternal rules; so that he can never love what he once hated, nor hate what he once loved. For the immutability of God's love and hatred consists [not] in this, that he always loves and hates persons for the same reason and motive. And indeed that love is but a foolish fondness, that hatred but an unreasonable antipathy, that, without any reasonable motive, always determines on the same person: and if God loves and hates our persons upon reasonable motives, his love and hatred would be fickle and mutable, if when those motives cease, his love and hatred should continue. If he should continue to love us when the reason is wholly ceased that first moved him thereunto, he must either love us for no reason, which would be a foolish fondness, or he must love us for contrary reasons, which would be fickleness and inconstancy; and therefore, when God ceases to love and hate the same persons, when the reason of his loving and hating them ceases, it proceeds not from the inconstancy, but the immutability of his love and hatred; for though they may change their objects, yet they can never change their reasons. For the reasons of God's love and hatred are in the objects whom he loves and hates; and therefore, if he changes the objects of his love and hatred, and when they themselves are changed, if he love a person whom he hated, when that person is changed from hateful to lovely; or hate a person whom he loved, when that person is changed from lovely to hateful; it is not he that changes, but the persons that are the objects of his love or his hatred; for amidst all

changes of objects, his love and hatred are eternally the same, because they are eternally fixed and determined to the same reasons. But now his love being naturally founded in likeness, what can we suppose should be the reason of God's love or hatred to us, but only our likeness or unlikeness to himself? For if we resemble him in that goodness, and truth, and purity, and justice, which are essential to his nature, he must needs love us for his own sake; because we partake of his nature, and are allied to him by a similitude of temper and perfections. But then, when we are not only unlike, but contrary to him; when we are impure, spiteful, and malicious; when we are false, unrighteous, and unreasonable; he hath an antipathy against us, founded in his very nature; and he can no more love us, whilst we are so contrarily disposed to him, than he can hate himself. Wherefore, since there is nothing can render us lovely in God's eyes, but only our resembling him in purity and goodness; nothing can render us hateful, offensive, and distasteful to him, but our being impure, and wicked, and unlike him; it hence necessarily follows, that we can no otherwise render ourselves amiable to him, no otherwise avoid offending and grieving him, but only by keeping his commandments; for therein all those graces are enjoined wherein our resemblance of him consists; and all those vices are forbid, that are contrary to him, and do deform us in his eyes. So that by doing his will, we imitate his nature, and shall acquire such a godlike temper of mind, as will render us more glorious and lovely in his esteem, than if we were decked with stars or clothed in a robe of sunbeams: whereas, on the contrary, by disobeying his will, we

contract such an unlikeness and contrariety to him, as renders us more offensive to him than the most loathsome deformities in nature. For in God's eyes there is nothing ugly but sin, nothing amiable but virtue and true goodness. Wherefore, since our love of God necessarily includes an earnest desire of rendering ourselves lovely and amiable in his esteem; and since we have no other way to accomplish this desire, but only by keeping his commandments; it necessarily follows, that we cannot sincerely love him whilst we disobey him. For with what confidence can we pretend to love him, when it is indifferent to us whether we render ourselves lovely or loathsome to him; when by disobeying his will, we wilfully contract those deformities which we know he abhors; and which are more odious in his eyes, than any of the most loathsome spectacles in nature? Is it possible that true love should consist with taking pleasure in the only things that can grieve and offend its object? Or were there ever such lovers heard of, that affected the deformities that were most hateful to the beloved? No, no; he that heartily loves, must desire to be beloved; and he that desires to be beloved, must desire to be lovely. Wherefore, since nothing is lovely in God's eyes but what is like God, and we cannot be like him, unless we keep his commandments; what an immodesty is it in us to pretend to love him while we choose to disobey him?

4. And lastly, If we love God sincerely, we shall be ready cheerfully to undergo any thing for his sake, be it never so hard and difficult: for love is a bold and vigorous passion; it makes weak things strong, and turns cowards into heroes, and warms and animates the heart with such a generous fire, as dis-

defeat all opposition, and courageously outbraves the greatest dangers and difficulties. For he that loves heartily, would do any thing for the sake of his beloved; and then, measuring his strength by the greatness of his desires, he thinks himself able to do whatever he will. So strongly doth his passion transport nature beyond the bounds of its abilities, inspiring it with such force and vigour, as that scarce any thing is able to withstand it. If therefore we love God sincerely and heartily, our love must necessarily resolve into obedience to his will, be it never so hard and difficult: for our love will enliven and animate our endeavours of serving him, and carry us with such spirit and alacrity through all the weary stages of our duty, that it will be our meat and drink to do his will; and there is no instance of obedience, be it never so hard and difficult, but our love will smother, and render it not only easy, but delightful. For what I do for him whom I love, I do for myself; his pleasures being mine, and our wills, and ends, and interests being involved in one another. So that if my love be in any measure intense and cordial, I shall do his pleasure and perform his will with the same complacency and delight, as if I were doing my own; and whatsoever difficulties I meet with in serving him, I shall encounter them with joy, that I am furnished with opportunities of expressing the zeal and sincerity of my love to him. So that to pretend to love God, and yet to boggle at the difficulties of obeying him, is the most shameful hypocrisy in nature: for if we did as highly love him as we pretend, our wills would be swallowed up in his, that it would be our joy and recreation to serve him; and the very thought that we are doing what is pleasing

and grateful to him, would level all the mountains of difficulties in our way, and render them not only accessible, but easy. He therefore that stumbles at every straw, and startles at every difficulty in religion, must be a notorious hypocrite, if he pretend to the love of God: for where true love is, difficulty is so far from daunting it, that that animates and encourages it; and instead of blunting its activity, whets and renders it more keen and vigorous: because the greater the difficulty is, the greater is its opportunity of manifesting its own sincerity, and thereby of recommending itself to its beloved; the joy of which not only balances, but endears all its pains and trouble. Hence the apostle tells us, that *there is no fear in love; and that perfect love casteth out fear*, 1 John iv. 18. It inspires us with such bravery and courage, that there is no difficulty in our obedience to him whom we love, that can daunt or terrify us. Wherefore, since this is a necessary property of the love of God to make us ready to undergo any thing for his sake, this also must necessarily resolve into the keeping his commandments: for if we are willing to do any thing for God, we shall surely be willing to obey him; and though our obedience in some instances may be difficult, yet our love, if it be real, will conquer its way through them all.

And thus you see how all the essential properties of the love of God do finally resolve into obedience: from whence it is evident, that wheresoever the love of God is, it will most certainly prove a principle of obedience.

II. I proceed now to the second head of discourse, which was to shew, that the love of God is in itself the most perfect principle of obedience. Not that

I think all other principles in their own nature bad, for God himself hath proposed other principles of action to us, besides this of love: he hath denounced his fearful threatenings against us, to alarm our fear, that by that we may be moved to obey him; and propounded his glorious promises to us, to excite our hope, that that may be a spring and principle of obedience in us. And certainly that can be no bad principle which is incited in us by divine motives: but yet it is most certain, that there is no principle whatsoever can be acceptable to God, that is quite separated from love to him; for that which makes it acceptable is this, that it is a principle of universal obedience. But now the love of God being the greatest instance of our obedience, that can be no principle of universal obedience that is wholly separated from it. It is true, the religion of most men begins upon a principle, either of hope or fear; and it cannot be denied but they are very good beginners: but yet, till by these we are induced to love God, as well as to practise all other duties, we are by no means pleasing and acceptable to him: so that though the fear of punishment and the hope of reward are good ingredients in the principle of our obedience, yet till they have some intermixtures of love with them, they can make no claim to the divine acceptation. There may be indeed, and at first there generally is, much less of love in this principle of obedience, than of hope and fear; whilst yet the whole composition is very acceptable to God: for the lowest degree of cordial love, intermixed with our hope and fear, will leaven and consecrate them into an acceptable principle of obedience: but still, the less love there is in it, the more weak, and languid, and imperfect it is;

and in all its progress towards perfection its maturity is to be measured by the degrees of love that are in it; and till our love is arrived unto that degree of ardency, as to become the predominant motive and master ingredient in it, our state in goodness is very slow and imperfect. So that, in short, the principle of our obedience is more and more perfect, the more of love there is in it, and the less of hope and fear; and when hope and fear are all swallowed up in love, and that is the sole spring of action within us, then it is the principle of heaven, and the soul that acts and animates the religion of *the spirits of just men made perfect*. But to convince you how much our obedience is perfected by love, I shall briefly give you these following instances of it:

1. It rendereth our obedience universal and unconfined.

2. Sprightly and cheerful.

3. Natural and easy.

4. Constant and steady.

1. Love renders our obedience universal and unconfined. When men are acted only by a principle of fear, they must be very narrow and stingy in their religion: for they will be sure to do no more than just what is necessary to quiet their fears and calm their consciences; and because they do not like what they do, but are merely forced upon it by the terror and anguish of their own minds; therefore, if they can, they will find some way to pacify their consciences without doing it, or at least with doing as little as may be, or with doing that only which they like best, and is most agreeable to their vitiated tempers. Thus persons of sour and morose natures, when they are acted merely by the terrors of their

consciences, commonly betake themselves to some little affected singularities and severities in religion; they will put on some distinguishing garb, and tip their tongues with some peculiar phrases, and screw their faces into a most devout and mortified figure; they will condemn themselves into a state of silence, and retire from all the pleasures and most innocent festivities of conversation; they will frown all good humour out of their houses, and will not endure so much as a smile in their families, especially on the Lord's day; and take a world of care and pains to mope their children into unsociable statues, and to train them up in the religion of pensive looks, and solemn faces, and ejaculated eyes; for this is such a reformation, as is suitable to their sour and surly natures; and therefore with this they will seek to bribe their consciences to connive at all their black and devilish inclinations. Thus also it is usual for slanderers and backbiters, contentious and censorious persons, when they are under an agony of conscience, to list themselves into some sect or party, where, under the pretence of being the only people of God, they may consecrate their own unhallowed passions, and rail and backbite with zeal and devotion; where they may spit all their venom in spiritual gossiping, and freely employ the talent of their ill nature in damning and censuring those they dissent from; for this is such a conversation as best agrees with their cankerous inclinations: so that if they can but cheat their conscience with it, that and their beloved lust will be very well reconciled. Thus also the covetous and griping oppressor, when he cannot otherwise still the cries of his conscience, will betake himself to some of the cheaper exercises of religion;

he will fast and pray, hear sermons and receive sacraments, because all these things he can do without intrenching upon his vice; he can say his prayers for nothing, and save money by keeping a fast, and eat and drink at the sacrament gratis; all this is so cheap a religion, that it costs him nothing to maintain it, and so his covetous mind hath no reason to grudge at it: so that if his conscience will be satisfied with this, his lust and that may shake hands and be friends. And, to name no more, thus when the intemperate and lascivious person is dogged by the fears of his guilty mind, it is usual for him to sigh and mourn, and make woful confessions of his sins; and when he hath done so, to endeavour to persuade himself that this is true repentance; which if he can do, he may sin on securely, provided he doth but perpetually keep himself in this circle of repenting and sinning, and sinning and repenting. But if he cannot so cheat himself, he will next fly to the sanctuary of a partial reformation, and disband the vices he can best spare, that so he may keep his more beloved ones in pay, hoping that by a sacrifice of some few of his sins he may make an atonement for all the rest. Thus, when men are only acted by their fears, they will find some way or other to contract their religion into so narrow a compass, that it will be sure not to intrench too far upon the liberties of their lusts. For he that doth a thing out of fear is averse to doing it, and that aversion will so stint and limit him, that he will contrive all ways to do as little as he can; and still the less he is forced to do, the better he will be pleased.

But love is that great soul that acts and animates the whole body of religion, and equally diffuses its

influence through every part and member of it: for the will of the beloved is the law of the lover; and every thing pleases him, that is pleasing to him whom he loves. So that if we love God, we shall do what he commands, because it is his will and pleasure; and that reason extends equally to all, as well as any instances of obedience; and therefore, if the motive of our obedience be this, that it is God's will and pleasure, we must necessarily obey him, so far as we understand, in every thing that is so. For if we love God, there will be such a consent and harmony between his will and ours, that we shall be best pleased with what pleases him; and being so, our obedience will be no longer limited by any particular likes or dislikes of our own, which will then all vail and prostrate themselves to God's sovereign pleasure, and there will be nothing but that to set limits and bounds to our obedience. So that then we shall be so far from contriving how to escape doing his will, that we shall be ready to court all opportunities of pleasing him, and be so passionately desirous of doing what we think is grateful to him, that we shall not only perform what he requires by explicit command, but be ready to comply with the most secret notices and intimations of his pleasure, and to do whatsoever we think will please him when it is performed, whether it be commanded or no.

2. Love renders our obedience sprightly and vigorous: for it is certain there is no passion in human nature so active and vigorous as that of love; for in this all the other passions are seated as in their common root and principle, and, like so many streams, though they run several ways, and in different channels, yet do they all issue out of one common spring,

and that is love. For the love of ourselves is the parent of all our passions; it is that which makes us hate what is contrary to us, and desire and hope for whatsoever is pleasant and agreeable. And when we love any particular object, and our wills are pleasingly affected with the beauty of it, if it be a thing that is possible for us to enjoy, that excites in us a desire of enjoyment; if, together with the possibility, there be a probability of enjoying it, that excites hope and expectation: but if there be not, that excites fear; and this hope and fear being exalted to their highest degree, turn into confidence and desperation. If any difficulty oppose itself to our enjoyment, that excites choler, and courage, and boldness; and if we surmount those difficulties that hindered our enjoyment, that excites joy and exultation of mind. Thus love, you see, as soon as it is taken with the beauty of an object, immediately kindles its desires, excites its hope and fear, and carries the fire into all the passions which hold of its empire: so that having the united force of all the other passions at its beck and command, its self must needs be extremely potent and vigorous; and consequently, when it is terminated upon God, and become the reigning principle of our obedience to him, there is no passion in our natures can have that influence upon us, to make us active and vigorous in the doing of his will, as this may reasonably be supposed to have; because when we are under the command of love, that having in it the force of all our other passions, must necessarily move and act us with all their united influence. And when the separate force of all our passions, like so many single threads, are twisted into one cord, with what a potent, I had

almost said omnipotent vigour must they draw and attract us! When our love of God shall all at once awaken in us the desire and hope of enjoying him, the fear and displeasure of losing him, the resolution and courage to charge through every difficulty that opposes our fruition of him, and our obedience shall be all at once informed and animated with the united force of all those mighty passions, how active and vigorous must it needs be! For the Wise Man tells us, that *love is as strong as death*, Cant. viii. 6. that it is an equal match for the all-conquering king of terrors, to whose power the mightiest things do stoop: and indeed it must needs be strong, when it hath all the force of human nature in it, and is winged with the united vigour of so many strong and active affections. Hence the apostle attributes a constraining virtue to it, 2 Cor. v. 14. *For the love of God constraineth us*; it sweetly tyrannizes over all our faculties; and by a willing violence, forces and captivates us into obedience. But when a man is acted only by a principle of fear, he must needs drive on heavily in the course of his obedience; because what a man doth out of fear, he would not do; so that he acts with aversation, and moves all along counter to his own inclinations, and hath not the joint concurrence of his other affections, as he hath when he acts out of love; and consequently, his passions thwarting and crossing one another, do retard and hinder each other's motions. So that though the motion of fear doth finally prevail, yet it is so broken and weakened by the counter motions of inclination, that it cannot act us with that sprightliness and vigour as otherwise it would do: for whilst our fear gives wings to us, our inclination

hangs a clog at our heels, which wearies those wings, and slackens and retards their flight. Whereas, on the contrary, when we are acted by love, there is no counter motion within to let and hinder us, but all our passions unite and conspire; and, like the inferior orbs of heaven, move harmoniously with love, the first great mover, because there is nothing within to check or allay it; and so we move on freely *secundo flumine*, with the full and uninterrupted current of our natures. So that love, you see, is a most active and vigorous soul; it makes us all life, and spirit, and wing, and animates our religion with such a sprightly flame, as nothing is able to control or suppress. If therefore we were but once thoroughly informed with the love of God, this would so enliven us, that there is nothing in religion would be too hard for us; this would turn toils into recreations, and difficulties into pleasures, and make us so nimble and agile in our obedience, that we should *run the way of God's commandments*, as David said he would do, *when God should enlarge his heart with the love of him*, Psalm cxix. 32. And whereas languid souls, enfeebled with the want of this generous passion, find impossibilities, and complain of impotencies, and make a stop, we should go on and conquer with an invincible power. Thus love, you see, is the most sprightly and vigorous principle of obedience.

2. Love renders our obedience free, and cheerful, and voluntary. He who obeys God only from a principle of fear, obeys him against his will: he takes down his duty as sick men do physic, with loathing and reluctancy; and only submits to it, as a more tolerable penance than the present horror that he feels, and the after-damnation that he fears; he only

chooses it as the least of two evils, that is, as a thing that he hates, though not in so great a degree as he doth those greater evils, which he knows are inseparable to his not choosing it: and while it is thus with him, it is impossible he should obey with any freedom or alacrity. For how can a man cheerfully comply with what he hates, or become a volunteer to that which is his torment? He may labour indeed at his duty, and tug hard, like a galley-slave, at the oar; but, alas! it is sore against his will: he would fain be at his lust again, but that he is chained to his duty, and kept in awe by that flaming scourge that is held over him: so that he is perfectly pressed to serve God; and, like an unwilling victim, is dragged to his altars. Now though this may be a good beginning of religion, which through the passion of fear doth usually make its first entrance into the soul; yet if it stop here, and doth not pass forwards into love, it is but half way, and will never be able to obtain an entire possession. For whilst we obey God merely out of fear, we want one half of our religion, and that is love; which is that half too, wherein the subjection of our souls to God consisteth: for while we only fear him, that may constrain us to an eternal homage and obedience; but it is love alone that can enthrone him in our wills, and make us volunteers in his service. But when once this divine fire is enkindled within our breasts, it will by degrees melt away all our secret repugnancies and aversations to our duty; and so mould and temper our wills to the will of God, that at last our obedience will be no longer a burden to us, but we shall run to our duty with the same complacency and delight, as we do now to our pleasures and recreations; and do the

will of our Father upon earth, as it is done by our brethren in heaven, who being all inflamed with love to him, do find a heaven of joys in serving and adoring him. For if we did heartily love God, it is impossible but we should feel a pleasure in pleasing him; our wills would so sympathize with his, that we should feel his joys and taste his pleasures: and those things only would be irksome and ungrateful to us, which we know do grieve and distaste him. For love turns service into wages, and pays herself with the pleasures of pleasing; she counts all commands favours, and is highly satisfied with the honour of obeying; and if she can but accomplish the pleasure of her beloved, she thinks herself wholly recompensed for all her tedious toils and labours. And certainly if our souls were but inspired with any considerable degrees of this heavenly passion, we should find such pleasure in pleasing God, as would for ever engage us to serve him: for then every service that we rendered him would be a free sally of an enamoured will, and so our hearts would be wrapped up in every duty, and our souls would still be ascending heavenwards, like the angel that appeared to Manoah, in the flames of all our sacrifices. So that this excellency also love hath above all other principles of obedience, that it renders our obedience most free, most cheerful, and voluntary.

4. And lastly, Love renders our obedience constant and steady. When a man's religion is only animated with fear, as it is weak and languid while it lives, so it generally hastens to an untimely period. For fear is a passion so burdensome to human nature, that we cannot but desire to quit and discharge ourselves of it as soon as possible may be:

and accordingly the apostle tells us, that *there is torment in fear*, 1 John iv. 18. For it separates the soul from the enjoyment of herself, and gives such an ungrateful tang to her pleasures, that she can find no rest or satisfaction in any thing, so long as she is haunted with it. Now when that which is the principle of our religion is a burden to us, we cannot but endeavour, if possible, to ease ourselves of it; which we cannot otherwise do, but either by going forwards to love, or by returning back again to sinful presumption. For as for fear, it is like the wilderness through which Israel passed, a place where there is no abiding with content and satisfaction; so that we must go back again into Egypt, or forwards to Canaan, or be content to sit down in misery and disquiet. For we can never be at rest, till our fear is either sweetened with an intermixture of love, or stifled with vain hopes and ungrounded presumptions; and there being so many arts of self-deceiving in the world, and skinning over the wounds of conscience, if men do not speedily cure their fear by love, they will soon find some other way to extinguish it; either they will promise their consciences a future amendment, or else they will presently amend by halves, or else they will take sanctuary in some false notions in religion, that tend to secure them in their sins, and render them quietly wicked: these, or some other ways, they will find to quit themselves of this troublesome passion; and then, when the weights of their fear are down, the wheels of their religion will stand still immediately. So that you plainly see, that bare fear can never be a lasting and steady principle of religion; and that because it is so troublesome, that men will not long have the patience to endure it.

But as for love, that is naturally a most sweet and grateful passion; it soothes and ravishes the heart, and puts the spirits into a brisk and generous motion; and so long as it continues pure love, is always attended with joy and pleasure; and being so in itself, it is much more so when it is terminated upon God. For all the disquietudes of love arise from the imperfections of its object; either the person beloved is coy and cruel, which imbitters the love with sorrow and regret, or else he is fickle and inconstant, which inflames it with rage and jealousy. But when our love fixes upon God, it hath neither of these causes of disturbance; for he is infinitely loving unto all that love him, and he never changes the objects of his love, unless they change and prove fickle and inconstant in their affection to him. For whilst he hath the same reason to love, his love is always the same, and is as constant and immutable as his being. So that in the love of God there is no reason for any of these griefs and jealousies that are so commonly intermingled with carnal loves and affections: for it being fixed upon an object that doth so well deserve, and will so amply requite it, it can find nothing there but infinite causes of pleasure and complacency: for the object of our love being infinitely lovely, and infinitely loving, the affection must needs be unspeakably pleasing and grateful. So that the love of God, you see, must needs be sweet and serene, and productive of the most delightful and ravishing emotions, there being nothing in him but what tends to its greatest content and satisfaction; and being so, it must necessarily prove a most lasting principle of obedience to him; because whatsoever it is, it is always attended with such substantial pleasures and

delights, that there can be no temptation to extinguish it; for so long as we feel nothing in it but what is highly grateful to our natures, we shall be so far from using arts to quit ourselves of it, that we shall think it our greatest interest to promote and increase it. For still the more we love him, the better we shall be pleased; and the better we are pleased, the more we shall endeavour to love him: and so our pleasure and our love will mutually provoke and augment one another, till both are arrived to the utmost height of their perfection. Thus the love of God, you see, is a lasting principle; it is a fire that can live upon the fuel which itself creates, and maintain itself for ever in strength and vigour, by feeding upon the joys and pleasures which it produces: so that if this be the principle upon which we do obey, our religion must needs be lasting and steady, because it is acted and animated by a principle that is so.

Having thus demonstrated the proposition in the text, That wheresoever the love of God is, it will express itself in obedience to his will; I shall now conclude the whole with some practical inferences.

1. From hence I infer, how necessary it is to the very being of religion to keep up good thoughts of God in the world; because without such, men will never be able to love him, and without love, they will never be reduced to a thorough submission to his heavenly will. For it is by love alone that God reigns in our hearts, and doth both acquire and preserve the empire of our souls. We may be awed into a forced and fawning submission, merely by the dread and terror of his power; and be obliged to serve him as the Indians do the Devil, for fear he should

do us mischief, and tear us in pieces; but this is merely the religion of slaves, who are forced to undergo one evil for fear of another; and to do what they hate, for fear of suffering what they cannot endure. And as slaves do generally hate those whom they fear, and even whilst they are fawning and cringing to their imperious masters, had much rather cut their throats if they could do it with safety; so when men are acted in their obedience to God merely by a slavish dread of his vengeance, they generally hate him whilst they obey him; and if it were in their power, would rather ungod him, and pull him down from his throne, than render him those homages which they dare not withhold. Now is it possible that he who knows the hearts of men, and sees the inmost workings of their minds, should ever be pleased with such a base and sordid religion; a religion that is conjoined with such an inveterate hatred to his person and government, and restrains men only by fear of punishment, from flying in his face; a religion that is wholly founded in passion, that causes us to hate him as well as to fawn upon him; that carries in it a secret antipathy to his nature and his laws; and would much rather vent itself in an open rebellion than in a forced submission, had it but power enough to defend itself from his fury? and yet this is the best religion that mankind is capable of without the love of God. So that if ever we intend to keep up a generous religion in our souls, such as becomes freeborn minds, to offer to the great Sovereign of the world, we must be sure to purge out all those sour and rigid notions of God, that represent him any ways unlovely to us.

2. Hence I infer, how miserably those men are

mistaken, that make any thing a sign of their love to God but what tends to their keeping his commandments. There are too many persons that are apt to measure their affection to God and Christ by the mere impressions of sensitive passion; because, upon some moving and affecting representations of those amiable objects, they feel in themselves the same sensitive emotions as they are wont to do when they fall in love with other things: that is, if they feel their spirits soothing and ravishing their hearts, and their hearts diffusing and opening themselves to let in those soft and amorous spirits, they conclude themselves presently infinitely in love with God and with their Saviour; whereas many times all this is merely the effect of an amorous complexion, tinctured and inflamed with religious ideas, and is commonly as remote from the virtue of love, as light is from darkness, or heaven from hell. For as there are many men who are sincerely good, that cannot raise their sensitive passions in their religious exercises; that are heartily sorry for their sins, and yet cannot weep for them; and do entirely love God, and delight in his service, and yet cannot move their blood and spirits into the ravishing passions of sensitive love and joy: so on the other hand, there are many gross hypocrites that have not one drachm of true piety in them, who yet in their religious exercises can put themselves into wondrous transports of bodily passion; who can pour out their confessions in floods of tears, and cause their hearts to dilate into raptures of sensitive love, and their spirits to tickle them into ecstasies of joy: which is purely to be resolved into the different tempers of men's bodies; some tempers being

naturally calm and sedate, as that they are scarce capable of being disturbed into a passion; others again so soft, and tender, and impressible, that the most frivolous fancy is able to raise a commotion in them. And hence we see, that some people can weep most heartily at the misfortunes of lovers in plays and romances; and as heartily rejoice at their good successes, though they know that both are but fictions and mere ideas of fancy; whereas others can scarce shed a tear or raise a sensitive joy at the real calamities or prosperities of a friend, whom yet they love a great deal better than others can be supposed to do their feigned and romantic heroes. And yet because of these sensitive transports which men do sometimes feel in themselves, when their fancies have been chafed a while with a pathetical description of God, they presently vote themselves his friends and lovers: whereas in truth, that which commonly moves their affection is not any thing real either in God or in Christ, but some sensual beauty attributed to them in fanciful descriptions, that smites their carnalized fancies. For generally we find that it is a metaphorical God and Christ that such men fall in love with: they set up an idol of God and Christ in their fancies, and dress it in such carnal metaphors and allusions, as their sensual minds are most apt to be taken with; and then imagine that it smiles on them, and kisses and caresses them with all the pretty endearments of a doating lover; whereupon they grow so extremely fond of it, that they are not able to forbear hugging and dandling it. But alas, poor men! they hug the cloud instead of the goddess; and while they think

they have God and Christ in their arms, embrace nothing but a spectre of their own fancies: for let but any other person, though it were only the hero of a romance, or the lover of a play, be but described to them in the same language and the same glistering allusions, and they shall experience in themselves the same passion for them as they have for their God and their Saviour. Thus in the Roman nunneries and monasteries we generally find the monks fall in love with the Virgin Mary, whilst the nuns are all enamoured with Jesus Christ; that is, they choose the objects of their love according to the different inclinations of their sexes; and the reason why they choose so differently is no other than this, that they both frame to themselves such different carnal ideas of the different objects of their love, as are most suitable and agreeable to their carnal inclinations: but very commonly neither the monk loves the Virgin Mary nor the nun Jesus Christ, but they both merely doat upon the different images of their own fancies; which do not at all represent those divine beauties for which those sacred persons do well deserve to be beloved. And thus it is too commonly among ourselves, when yet we pretend to be zealous lovers of God. Wherefore, unless we have a mind to deceive ourselves, let us no longer depend on such fallacious evidences as these, but let us try our love of God by his own touchstone, and that is, our obedience to his heavenly will. *If any man love me*, saith our Saviour, *he will keep my words*, John xiv. 23. and, *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you*, John xv. 14. for *this*, saith St. John, *is love, that ye walk after his commandments*, 2 Epist. 6.

For the love of God and of Christ being a rational love, is only to be valued by those rational effects it produces in us: if it transform us into the image of God, and makes us love what he loves, and hate what he hates; these are much more certain indications of our love to him, than the most ravishing effects of sensitive passion. For though our hearts are melted into a transport and fondness to him, yet so long as our hearts and our practices are incompliant to his will and laws, he will look upon us and deal with us as hypocrites and enemies, and esteem all our sensitive fondnesses towards him but as the base flatteries of Judas, who kissed him, and then betrayed him.

2. Hence I infer, what the great reason is why God doth so strictly enjoin us to love him. For there is no command whatsoever so often repeated in scripture as this of loving God: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul. What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to love him? O love the Lord, all ye his saints. Take heed therefore to yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God.* These, and a world of other reiterated injunctions of love, do we meet with in that sacred pages. But how comes this to pass? Doth God need our love, that he so importunately calls for it? Or doth it contribute any thing to his happiness, to see himself beloved of all his great world of beings which he hath made, and which he hath endued with the capacity of loving him? No, no; though doubtless the best thing we can give him is our love, yet he is too happy in himself to need any thing of ours; for he is a bottomless fountain of happiness, circumscribing all those blisses that he can need or desire, within the boundless circle of his own being.

Or doth he court our love merely that he may glory in the numbers of his lovers, and pride himself in those infinite flames that concentre in him? No; nor this neither; for he is so infinitely glorious in himself, that no act of ours can either add to or substract from his glory; which, amidst all the hallelujahs of angels and saints, and all the blasphemies of men and devils, shines with the same unwearied splendour and brightness; and is neither diminished by our hatred, nor improved by our love. Well then, if neither of these be the reason, what is it? It is true, the thing is infinitely reasonable in itself, that he who is so lovely in himself should be beloved; and that all our affections should be united in him, who is the fountain of all our beings and well-beings: and God, who is the author of our reasonable faculties, cannot but desire that we should act reasonably, and love that best which best deserves to be beloved. But is there not some particular end for which God doth so earnestly crave and exact our love? Yes, doubtless there is; and such as is every way worthy of him that hath proposed it. For it cannot be supposed that a Being infinitely wise should ever act without end or aim; but God, being infinitely happy, cannot be supposed to propose any end for his own advantage; because that would imply, that he wants or desires some good that he hath not; and consequently, that he is not happy. But then he being infinitely good as well as happy, we cannot imagine what other end he should have of his actions, but only to do good to his creatures and promote their happiness; and consequently, the end and reason for which he doth so importunately demand our love, is not to add any thing to himself, but to

do good to us; *for our goodness extendeth not to God*, as the Psalmist tells us, xvi. 2. And though the love of God be a very great perfection to our natures, yet Job tells us, that *it is no gain at all to God, that we keep our ways perfect*, Job xxii. 3. But though it is none to God, yet it is an infinite gain to ourselves, and that is the end and reason for which he requires it: for, as I have already shewed you, of all the principles of our obedience to God, love is the most pregnant and fruitful. Now God requires us to obey him for our own good, he having enjoined us nothing but what tends to the perfection and happiness of our natures; and he requires us to love him, that so we may the more entirely and perfectly obey him, and thereby more speedily arrive to that happiness for which his infinite goodness hath designed us. So that all the profit, both of our love and obedience, accrues to ourselves: it is we only that reap the fruit of our own virtues, we only that are exalted by those homages that we render to our Maker; for he is as happy without our love, as he is with it; and all those united flames of angels and saints that meet and concentre in him, add not one spark to the infinite element of his happiness; which were not infinite, could it admit of increase! But the lovers themselves are glorified by their love; and because they are so, God requires and exacts it. For our love being the great soul of our obedience, and our obedience the necessary means of our happiness, the profit of both must necessarily redound to ourselves; and it is we only that must be enriched and glorified by them. For this reason therefore God requires our love, that it may be a living principle of obedience; and that being so, it might ac-

celebrate but happiness: for he whose love of God is but arrived to the degree of a reigning principle of obedience, so as that his obedience proceeds more from his love than from any other passion, doth already border on the heavenly state, and is within the confines of perfection. For as for the inhabitants of heaven, they are all acted by pure love, which makes their obedience pure and perfect: they see God face to face, and by their sight are all inflamed with love to him, and by their love are winged with everlasting vigour and readiness to serve him; and all their aversations to his heavenly will being swallowed up in perfect love, they not only obey without murmuring, but with infinite ravishment and pleasure; and never feel themselves more in heaven, than while they are serving, praising, and adoring him. This is the happy state of those heavenly lovers, and to this we are approaching with full speed, while we obey from a principle of love: for love will carry us on with wind and tide, from one degree of perfection to another; and whilst poor slavish souls, that are acted mainly by their fears, are fain to tug at the oar, and yet creep on but slowly, and by insensible degrees, we shall run forwards with ease and speed, and get more ground at one stroke than they can in twenty. For in one good action performed out of love, there is more virtue and goodness than in a hundred of those whereunto we are dragged by our own fears and terrors; because as the degrees of evil, so the degrees of good in all actions are to be measured by the degrees of will that are in them; and doubtless in those good actions that have love for their principle, there is much more of will than in those that proceed from fear and terror, and, compa-

quently, our nature being perfected by good actions, and more or less perfected by them, the more or less of goodness they have in them, must needs be much more perfected by the good actions of love, than by those of fear. Whilst therefore we are acted in religion by the love of God, our souls are upon the wing to perfection, and in a swift tendency to the heavenly state; we are already in the neighbourhood of glorified saints and angels; and if we continue our course, shall soon be fit for their society and converse. This therefore is the great end and reason why God doth so importunately claim our love, because this, of all others, is the most perfective principle of our natures, and consequently the most conducive to our happiness.

And lastly, From hence I infer, of what vast importance it is to us in religion to love God. For you plainly see, that love is not only a principle of obedience, but that, of all others, it is the most efficacious and operative; that it doth not only engage us to keep God's commandments, but that it enables us to keep them most universally, and vigorously, and cheerfully, and constantly. So that what the apostle saith of *brotherly love* is more universally true of the love of God, that is, *the keeping of the whole law*, Rom. xiii. 10. that is, causally and virtually it is. For so love is the universal cause which within its fruitful womb contains all the particulars of our obedience, and is naturally productive of them all; so that virtually, it is all religion; it is godliness, and temperance, and charity, and humility, and righteousness, and patience, being the common cause and parent of them all. For love hath an universal respect to the will of the beloved; it doth not choose

what is easy, and refuse what is hard; but likes what God likes, and disapproves of what he hates; his will being the great reason of all its choices and refusals: and whatsoever things in particular are distasteful and difficult to us, by its powerful oratory it renders pleasant and easy. For he that serves God out of love, serves him with delight; and he that serves him with delight, hath no clog to incumber him; none of those aversations and antipathies to his service, that do so load and depress unwilling minds; he doth not row against the current of nature, but acts with the full inclination of his mind, and so feels little or nothing of drudgery in his religion; and being carried on with a full tide of delight, he goes easily and cheerfully down with the stream. Of such vast importance is the love of God to our religion, that it not only produces it, but renders it easy and pleasant: so that without some degree of this, our religion can have neither being nor well-being; and it is as possible for us to live without a soul, and to be nourished without food, as it is for our religion to be and to thrive without the love of God.

Wherefore, if ever we would be religious indeed, if ever we would connaturalize religion to our souls, so as to render it easy and delightsome to us, let us endeavour to kindle this heavenly fire within us: and certainly, if we heartily endeavour it, we cannot fail of success. For there are so many mighty reasons to engage us to the love of God, so many invincible attractions in his nature, and in his love towards us, as cannot but affect us, if we seriously ponder and consider them. For how can I reflect upon that amiable nature of his, in which there is

an harmonious concurrence of all beauties and perfections, where wisdom and goodness, justice and mercy, and every lovely thing that can claim or deserve a rational affection, are contempered together in their utmost degrees of perfection; how, I say, can I steadily reflect upon such a nature as this, without being charmed and captivated with the love of it? How can I think of that stupendous love which he hath expressed towards me, in giving me my being, and all the blessings I enjoy; in preparing a heaven of immortal joys for me, and sending his Son from thence to conduct me thither, without being all inflamed with love to him? Wherefore, let us seriously set ourselves to the contemplation of God, of the loveliness of his nature, and of his infinite kindness to us and all his creation. Let us repeat the thoughts of these things upon our minds, and never give over pressing ourselves with those infinite reasons we have to love him, till we feel the heavenly fire begin to kindle within our breasts; and then let us never give over feeding and blowing it with these divine considerations, till it rise up into a triumphant flame. And then we shall feel ourselves animated with a new soul, and inspired with so much life and activity in religion, as that from our experience we shall be able to subscribe to the truth of the text; *This is the love of God*, this the most natural expression and inseparable effect of it, *that we keep his commandments.*

DISCOURSE XIII.

UPON

1 JOHN V. 3.

—— *And his commandments are not grievous.*

I PROCEED now to the next part of the text, viz. the motive by which this obedient love of God is enforced, *and his commandments are not grievous:* οὐκ εἰσὶν βαρεῖαι, they are not heavy or burdensome; they have no such weight or difficulty in them, as ought in reason to discourage us from keeping them. For in these words the apostle seems to anticipate an objection: Alas! if this be the love of God, to keep his commandments, what man is able to love him? For if his commandments are not absolutely impossible, yet are they at least so extremely difficult, that scarce any man can have the courage to undertake the performance of them. This, saith our apostle, is a mighty mistake, or a wretched pretence for men's sloth and idleness: for verily and truly, the commands of God have no such difficulty in them, but are in themselves very gentle and easy to be borne. And with this assertion our blessed Saviour doth most perfectly accord, Matt. xi. 30. *My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* And the prophet David makes it not only easy, but delightful, Psalm xix. 8. *The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes.* And then in the 10th verse he tells us, that *they are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; and sweeter than*

honey, or the honeycomb. So far are they from being toils and burdens, that in reality they are pleasures and recreations. But farther to demonstrate this truth to you, that God's commands are not burdensome and difficult, I shall do these two things:

I. Shew you that they are facile and easy in themselves.

II. That Christ, by what he hath done, hath rendered them much more facile than they are in themselves.

I. That the commands of God are facile and easy in themselves. And this will evidently appear, if we consider,

1. That whatsoever they enjoin, hath some natural good appendant to it.

2. That every thing which they enjoin, is highly agreeable to our reasonable natures.

3. That they are all perfective of our natures, and conducive to our happiness.

4. That in themselves they are plain, and simple, and direct, and have no intricacies or labyrinths in them.

5. That they are all so inseparably connected to one another, that they mutually promote and help forwards each other.

1. That whatsoever they enjoin, hath some natural good inseparably appendant to it, to sweeten and endear it. The great and wise first mover hath so ordered things in the course of motion which he hath established, that such and such actions should be ordinarily attended with such and such effects and consequents; and this is one great way, by which he hath signified to the world his dislike or approbation of human actions by the effects and conse-

quents which he hath chained and annexed to them. If in the course of things which he hath established, such an action be ordinarily attended with a good effect, he thereby signifies his approbation of it, and declares that it is his will and pleasure that we should do, and persevere in doing it: but if the consequents, which in the course of nature are ordinarily linked to such an action, are evil and hurtful, he thereby declares his dislike and abhorrence of it; and that it is his will and pleasure that we should carefully and constantly avoid it. For the great Author of our beings hath so framed our natures, and placed us in such circumstances and relations, that there is nothing vicious, but is also injurious to us; nothing virtuous, but is advantageous; and in this the good and evil of all human virtues and vices do consist; and it is purely for this reason, why he forbids the one, and commands the other, because he is our friend, and would not have us neglect any thing that tends to our good, nor do any thing that is hurtful and injurious to us; and because he knows, that while we are thus framed, and do continue in these circumstances and relations, it is impossible but virtue should be an advantage, and vice a mischief to our natures. And indeed the great sanction of the law of nature is nothing else but that natural good and evil, which is ordinarily consequent to the actions which it commands and forbids. For when God hath no otherwise revealed himself to the world, than only by the established course and nature of things, that was the only Bible whereby mankind could be instructed in his will and pleasure; and there being no threats or promises antecedently annexed unto bad and good actions, his will and plea-

sure concerning our doing or avoiding them, was only visible in those good or bad effects and consequences, which in the course of nature he hath made necessary to them. And indeed the moral good and evil of all actions is finally to be resolved into the natural good and evil that is appendant to them; for therefore our actions are morally good, because they are naturally beneficial to us; and therefore are they morally evil, because they are naturally prejudicial and hurtful: and those that are neither of these are indifferent actions, and stand in the middle between good and evil. And indeed this distinction of actions by their effects and consequents is in most particulars so plain and sensible, that all the world hath taken notice of it: for whereas all good actions have an apparent tendency, either to the public good, wherein our own private is involved, or to our own animal and sensitive good, our quiet, and health, and reputation, and prosperity; or to the perfection of our rational natures, and the sovereign pleasure and happiness of our minds; all bad actions tend directly contrary, either to the damage and ruin of the public weal, or to the hurt and prejudice of our animal and sensitive felicity; to the diseasing of our bodies, the staining our names, or the impoverishing our estates; or to the defacing and blemishing the beauty of our rational natures, and the interruption and disturbance of all the pleasures and felicities of our minds. And this distinction of good and evil actions is so immutably fixed in the nature of things, that it can never be obliterated, until God wholly alters the course of his creation, and impresses quite contrary laws of motion on it. For so long as we continue what we are, in the same na-

tues and circumstances, and relations to God and one another, righteousness and godliness, humility and universal love, must necessarily be good for us; and their contraries bad and destructive to our happiness.

Now, this wise and excellent constitution of things doth very much tend to the facilitating of virtue and goodness to us. For when things are so constituted, that it is become our interest as well as our duty to pursue virtue and eschew vice; when that which distinguishes our duty from our sin is the good that it doth us, and the apparent tendency it hath to our happiness; this, if we love ourselves, must needs endear and recommend it to us: for now we serve ourselves in serving our Maker; the substance of all whose injunctions is no more than this, that we should pursue our own happiness, by doing all those things which are necessary thereunto. I confess, had he made those actions which are our sins to be our duty, we had then some reason to complain; for then we should have been bound, in pure obedience to God, to damnify ourselves, and, like the wretched priests of Baal, to cut and slash our own bodies and souls, merely to humour and gratify the Divinity whom we adore; then, in obeying him, we must have acted our own tragedy, and made ourselves miserable in pure loyalty to our Maker. For there is such an inseparable bane clings to all vicious actions, as necessarily renders them destructive and venomous: and we may as soon clip off the sunbeams with a pair of scissors, as separate vice from its mischievous consequences. But now, when the sum of all that God requires of us is to be good to ourselves, and friends to our own

happiness; to do what is beneficial, and avoid what is hurtful to us; when every command of his is an instance of his love to us, and exacts nothing of us, but what we would have done of our own accords had we but known what is good for us as well as he, and loved ourselves as well as he loves us: in a word, when at the end of every good action there stands some natural good beckoning and inviting us to it; and at the end of every bad one, some natural evil, to warn and affright us from coming at it; so that we cannot run from any duty into any sin, without leaving a benefit for a mischief, and leaping out of some degree of happiness into some degree of misery: when things, I say, are thus, as it is apparent they are, with what conscience can we complain that our duty is burdensome and uneasy? This therefore is one great reason why God's commands cannot be grievous, because they require nothing but what is beneficial, and forbid nothing but what is hurtful and injurious to us. And sure, no man can have reason to complain that is forbid poison, and commanded to eat nothing but what is wholesome and nourishing.

2. Another thing that facilitates the commands of God is this, that they are highly agreeable to our reasonable natures. And hence the apostle calls the whole of our religion *a reasonable service*, Romans xii. 1. And for the truth of this, I dare appeal to any considering man in the world, whether those virtues which God hath enjoined be not in their own nature far more reasonable than any of the contrary vices; whether (supposing there be a God that made and governs the world, and from whom we derived our beings, and all the blessings we enjoy, or expect)

is not much more reasonable, in the nature of the thing, that we should worship, and revere, and love, and honour, and obey him; than that we should neglect, and despite, blaspheme and rebel against him; or whether we can behave ourselves so unworthily to one that hath deserved so well at our hands, without doing the greatest violence to our own reason; whether, since we are all of us reasonable beings, and our reason is the noblest ingredient of our natures, it doth not much better become us to subject our blind passions and appetites to those eternal rules of temperance which right reason prescribes, than to let loose the reins to them, and suffer them to run headlong into all excesses and riots; whether, since we are incorporated into the great society of mankind, it be not much more conducive to the good of the whole, to behave ourselves justly and honestly, charitably and obliging one towards another, than to defraud and oppress, malign and persecute one another. I dare appeal to any man, that hath ever thought twice of these matters, whether in point of reasonableness the advantage is not wholly on the side of virtue; yea, and whether the opposite vices, compared with these virtues, seem not as extravagant as the wildest freaks of a madman compared with the wise managements of a minister of state. But I need not appeal to particular men in this matter, since all the reasonable world is agreed in the point, and the men of all ages, and nations, and religions, how much soever in other points they have dissented from one another, yet in this have still been unanimous, that virtue is the wisest and most reasonable thing in the world, and vice the most absurd and irrational; and this not only in the ge-

neral, but in all those particular instances of virtue and vice, which Christianity commands and forbids. For, excepting the two sacraments, and believing in Jesus Christ, and the observation of the Lord's day, which are the instituted means of our religion, there is nothing made matter of duty to us, but what all the wise world hath long before pronounced most highly fit and reasonable.

This, therefore, must needs render the commands of God very easy to us, that they do so perfectly agree with our reasonable natures, and require nothing of us either to be done or avoided, but what the reason of every wise man would have obliged him to, whether God had commanded it or no. So that now, to facilitate our duty, we have the full concurrence of our reason; which, upon due and impartial consideration, cannot but approve and recommend it to us as the most reasonable thing in the world; and if it be so, how is it possible that it should be in its own nature grievous? Is it so hard a matter for men to act like men, and not to live their own reverse and antipodes? Is it such a mighty burden to comply with the most genuine inclinations of our nature; and to swim with the full tide and current of our reason in obeying those commands which are so far from offering any violence to our faculties, that they have their full consent and approbation? Let men say and teach what they please, it is as apparent as the sun, that the difficulties of religion commence not so much upon the stock of nature as of education, and evil habits and customs; for in all other instances that which is natural is always facile and easy; and if reason be the nature of a man, religion must be either natural or unreasonable

bled. So that religion disagrees with us upon no other account, but only because we disagree with ourselves; and it just so far crosses us, as we do the current of our own rational natures. We have sophisticated our natures with the intermixtures of sensual and devilish habits; and they are these, that the commands of God do aggrieve: and so it is not the man that is so burdened with religion, but it is either the beast or the Devil that is in him.

3. Another thing that facilitates God's commands is this; that they are mightily furthered and promoted by all the natural instincts and passions of human nature. There are certain propensions in human nature antecedent to all reason and discourse, that seem to be implanted in us by the wise Author of our beings for no other end, but only to minister to virtue and religion; such in particular are self-love, the love of truth, and of pleasure; commiseration, and gratitude, and affectation of praise; all which do discover themselves in us in our early infancy, before we are capable of discoursing ourselves into them. For even in young infants you may observe a great inclination to defend themselves, and to repel injuries, which proceeds from the principle of self-love that is in them, a vehement desire of what seems good to them, and a great displeasure when they perceive themselves deceived; the latter of which must proceed from their love of truth, as the former from their love of goodness. Again; when they see a miserable object, or one whom they think so, they presently bemoan it, and express by their actions a very earnest desire to defend and relieve it; which proceeds from that natural commiseration that is in them. Again; as soon as they are

able to distinguish faces and persons, we see they express the greatest love and fondness to those that tend, and feed them, and do them most good; which is a plain expression of their natural gratitude. And as soon as they understand the meaning of words and actions, they shew themselves highly pleased when they are commended and applauded; and much grieved and ashamed when they are derided and exposed: which plainly discovers their natural affectation of praise. These and such like instincts and propensions there are found in human nature; which, being well managed and improved by our reason, prove excellent instruments of virtue and religion; and do very much facilitate and further our practice of them. For this our natural self-love being guided by our reason, doth strongly incline us to serve and obey God; who, being the most powerful agent in the world, can do us the greatest good, if we please him, and the greatest hurt, if we affront and provoke him: so that, as we love ourselves, it concerns us to use all reasonable ways to endear and reconcile ourselves to him. Thus our natural desire of God, if conducted by our reason, will incline us to do the best actions; since from these the greatest good will necessarily redound to us; and our love of truth, by good management, may be easily improved into honesty and sincerity, and an universal abhorrence of vice, upon the account of those notorious cheats and impostors that are in it. Thus also by the bias of our natural commiseration we are strongly inclined to charity, and beneficence, and universal love; and by its own innate gratitude our nature is propense to the love of God, who is our sovereign benefactor; to honour and obey our parents, and do

all the acts and offices of a noble and generous friendship. And to name no more, thus by our natural affectation of praise we are strongly inclined to do praiseworthy things; and, consequently, to exercise ourselves in all those amiable virtues, which, by common consent, are looked upon as graces and ornaments of human nature. Thus, by all those instincts that God hath implanted in our natures, we are inclined to virtue and obedience to his will: and for this reason chiefly hath he implanted them in us; because they are excellent instruments of religion, having in them such a natural aptitude and proneness to facilitate our duty, by inclining us to it, and to farther us in holiness and virtue. I confess, there are none of these instincts but may be improved into vices; nor is there any thing so good, but what may be perverted to very bad purposes: and if men will abuse themselves, and wilfully debauch the instincts of their nature, there is no remedy for their folly; and they must thank themselves when they feel the dismal effects of it. But this, I think, is plain, that there are no propensions in human nature but what are much more improveable into virtue than into vice; and if men will but use themselves well, and as it becomes reasonable creatures to do, they would doubtless find themselves very much farthered in their duty by the natural instincts which God hath implanted within them. And this is a mighty advantage on virtue's side, that it is thus aided and assisted with all the instincts of our natures, which, like obedient handmaids, are most readily inclined to execute its commands, and minister to its pleasure and interest. How then is it possible, that religion in itself should be burdensome and grievous to us,

when the propensions of our nature do so fairly comply with it, and is helped forwards and promoted by all their united force and influence? It is difficult indeed for a man to go against the grain; but to act according to nature, to follow our own propensions, and to do what we are inclined to by natural instinct, is doubtless the easiest thing in the world.

4. Another thing that makes those virtues, which God commands, to be easy, is this; that they are all so inseparably connected to one another, that they mutually promote and help each other: for all the virtues are so mutually concatenated, that the stirring of any one link moves the whole chain. Thus, for instance, the true knowledge of God naturally inflames the soul with the love of him; and then the love of him insensibly transforms her into the image of his beloved goodness: for he that loves God must needs be enamoured with that divine goodness which is the root of his love: and while he is ravished with the sweetness of his good-will, the undeservedness of his grace, and the clemency of his pardon, an heavenly spirit steals into his soul, and he loves and becomes like God so both at once, that, like a wedge of steel, he is transformed into the likeness of the fire that heats him, and is all inflamed and enlightened at the same moment. And as he burns with love, so he resembles the goodness that set him on fire, and becomes pure as that is pure, and holy as that is holy, and just and merciful as that heavenly original is, which he copies and transcribes. Thus, wherenever the love of God is, it hath all the godlike virtues attending it; and that being the first link in the heavenly chain, whensoever it moves, it communicates motion to all the rest. For he that

heartily loves God, will love those whom God loves; and so the love of God will draw brotherly charity after it; and he who loves those whom God loves, will be just and righteous in his dealings and deportment towards them, and so brotherly charity will draw righteousness after it; and he that demeans himself justly and righteously towards others, will neither undervalue them, nor overvalue himself, and so righteousness will draw humility after it: and he that doth not overvalue himself, is fairly disposed to be sober in all his passions; and so humility draws temperance, and sobriety, and meekness after it. Thus one virtue smoothens the way to another, and makes it not only possible, but easy: for there is such a near neighbourhood between these heavenly sisters, that, when we are arrived at one, we pass insensibly to the next, and so on by degrees, till we have gone round with them all. For though there be not an immediate dependence of every virtue upon every one virtue, so as to make it necessary for a man to have all virtues in every moment that he hath one, (for a man may be charitable, and yet not presently humble, as he may be just, and yet not immediately temperate;) yet there is so near a dependance between them, that one always disposes the mind for another; this virtue always makes way for its next neighbour, and that for its next, and so on all around the circle of virtues. Thus humility naturally disposes the mind to meekness, meekness to charity, charity to justice, justice to devotion, (which is giving God his due,) and devotion to heavenly-mindedness and contempt of the world; and so all along there is a gentle and easy transition from one to the other. Now this must needs mightily facilitate the

virtues of religion, that they are so nearly confederated to each other, and so do naturally contribute to each other's assistance. For whereas, if it were not for this, there would be still the same difficulty in practising the second virtue, as there is in practising the first, and in practising the third, as there is in practising the second, and so every single virtue would be equally difficult; now the main difficulty lies in the first we began with; for by practising of that, we shall be so well disposed for the next, that afterwards we shall go on with much more ease and pleasure: for the first virtue being set a-going, like the first moving heaven, will communicate its motion from orb to orb, from one virtue to another, till the whole sphere whirls round in an harmonious order. Thus all the virtues, you see, do naturally lighten and ease one another, and every one contributes something to make every one more easy; so that, had we but the courage to begin to practise them, we should find they would every day grow more easy and easy to us; and that, not only because we should be more and more habituated to them, but because they being mutually allied to one another, the stronger they grow, the more vigorously they must further and promote each other.

5. And lastly, Another thing that makes the virtues that God hath commanded us easy, is this, that in themselves they are plain, and simple, and direct, and have no intricacies or labyrinths in them. As for sin and wickedness, it is an inextricable labyrinth, in which the further a man goes, the more he will perplex and lose himself; it is a boundless wilderness, whose paths do all thwart and cross one another. For all vices consist in extremes, and are

either the excesses or defects of virtue; so that there are two vices to one virtue, and both are extremes thwarting and running counter to one another. Now amidst this great diversity and contrariety of vices, the sinner must needs be extremely amazed and distracted: for his lusts are so infinite, that he can see no end of them; they do so cross and interfere with each other, that while he humours one, he displeases another. For in gratifying his sordidness, he affronts his pride, and in feeding his covetousness, starves his sensuality; so that his wretched soul wanders among infinite crossways, and is miserably distracted by its own contrary desires, which, like Actæon's hounds, are continually worrying and tearing her in pieces. But all the paths of virtue lie straight forwards between the vicious extremes, and, like parallel lines, do never interfere with one another: they never raise any contrary desires, nor distract our minds with inconsistent passions; but all their motions are regular and uniform, conspiring with and promoting one another. For the truth of it is, virtue is all but one entire thing, much like the centre of a circle, which, though many lines are drawn from it round about, and it is looked upon, sometimes as the term of this line, and sometimes of that, yet it is one term to them all, and is in itself undivided: so is virtue but one entire perfection, though it seems to be diversified in regard of the many affections that it moderates, and the several actions which he [it] doth produce: and though its precepts and actions are many, yet they are all ordinated to one end, and in that they are united, as well as in the principle from whence they proceed. And upon this account there can be none of those perplexing intricacies in the paths of virtue,

as are ordinarily found in the ways of sin, because they are all of them direct and straight, leading from one principle to one and the same end: and the principle and end of our motion being one, it is impossible but our designs, desires, and pursuits, should be simple and uniform; and consequently, the whole force of our souls being bent one way, we must needs proceed with more alacrity and ease, than we can possibly do when it is divided and dispersed among so great a multiplicity of ends and objects as vice proposes to us. So that here is one great advantage that virtue hath above vice, in respect of easiness, that whereas almost in every bad action a man hath a different end, now to satisfy this lust, and anon the contrary; in every virtuous one, his end is always the same: and whereas the former acts variously and inconsistently, and his desires frequently clash and run atilt at one another; the latter always moves directly and uniformly, by one and the same rule, towards one and the same end. And whereas many vices are in themselves full of entanglements, virtue is always plain, and open, and free. As for instance, how do we perplex and entangle ourselves by lying and knavery, consuming the pleasure of our lives within a winding maze of little tricks and intricate contrivances! and what shameful retreats and false colours, what fucuses and daubings are we fain to use to avoid contradiction and discovery! Whereas, were we but honest and sincere in our professions and actions, our way would be open, and easy, and uniform, wherein we might pursue all our ends by the directest means, and need never wander about in the labyrinths of a mysterious subtilty; where we may walk without blushing, in the sight

of the sun and in the view of the world, and have no occasion to sculk into coverts and retirements. And the same may be said of ambition, and covetousness, and pride, and wandering lust, vices that are usually full of great intrigues and mysteries; whereas the contrary virtues are all plain and simple, and have nothing of difficulty or intricacy in them. This therefore is a great advantage that virtue hath in respect of ease, that it is plain, and uniform, and simple, and direct. And so I have done with the first thing proposed, which was to shew you that God's commands in themselves are facile and easy. I now proceed,

2. To the second thing; which is to prove, that our blessed Saviour, by what he hath done, hath rendered them much more easy than they are in themselves. Now there are these four things which our Saviour hath contributed to the facilitating the commands of God.

1. The assistance of his holy Spirit.

2. The influence of his own example.

3. The merciful indulgence and condescension of his gospel to the weakness and infirmity of our natures.

4. The glorious rewards he hath promised us upon our sincere obedience.

1. To the rendering of God's commands easy, he hath contributed the assistance of his holy Spirit. For he hath promised to give his holy Spirit unto every one that asks: and therefore, though our nature of itself be extremely weak, and not able of itself to stand under the easy burden of its duty; if we will but struggle, and do what we are able, he is engaged by promise not to suffer us to sink. For if,

by doing what we can, it is in our power to engage him to enable us to do what we cannot, it is certainly in our power to do all: for though in our own strength we cannot do all; yet, if we please, it may be in our power to do more than all, through him that will strengthen us, if we will but do what we can.

2. To the rendering of God's commands easy, he hath also contributed the influence of his own most holy example. For by his own most perfect obedience to the commands of his father, he hath not only set us a copy to write after, but he hath also given us most convincing evidence that our obedience is both possible and honourable. That it is possible, we see by what he hath done; and it is certain that what hath been done may be done: that it is honourable, we see by his doing of it; for certainly so great a person as the Son of God would never have stooped to an inglorious obedience. So that the example of our Saviour not only encourages our obedience, but crowns and dignifies it, and renders it a fit object both of our endeavour and ambition: for by doing himself what he requires of us, he hath plainly demonstrated, not only that it may be done, but also that it highly becomes us to do it. Thus the glorious example of our Saviour, whilst it directs our obedience, doth at the same time excite and encourage it. For he conversed among men with a modest virtue, such as was suitable to an ordinary course of life. His piety was even, constant, and unblameable; complying with civil society and a secular conversation. It broke not forth into high transports and seraphic expressions; but was such as was both fit and easy for mortals to imitate. His virtue consisted

not in prodigious fastings, or high abstractions from sense; but in a life of justice and temperance, humility, and charity, and patience; that is, in such a life, as was not only proper, but possible for us to lead. And by this means he hath transmitted to us the more of an imitable virtue: for he did not outrun the capacities of men, in prodigious expressions of sanctity and virtue; but complied with our weakness, and kept pace with our strength; that so he might entertain us all along with the comforts of his company, and the influences of a perpetual guide. And as that rule of faith which he hath propounded to us is fitted to our understandings, being very short, easy, and intelligible; so the copy of manners which he hath set before us is not only fitted with excellencies worthy, but also with compliances possible to be imitated. And therefore, how efficaciously must such a glorious example contribute to the facilitating the commands of God to us; since it doth not only point us to our duty, but also excite us to perform it; and that both by its condescension to our strength and capacity, and by the plain demonstration it gives, that our duty is both possible and honourable.

3. To the rendering of God's commands easy to us, our Saviour hath also contributed the merciful indulgence and condescension of his gospel to the weakness and imperfection of our natures: for in his gospel he hath mercifully considered our state, that we are but frail imperfect creatures, that are very prone to act inconsiderately, and to be ever and anon surprised in this great hurry of temptations; and therefore in his holy gospel he hath made provision for us accordingly; that is, he hath propor-

tioned our burden to our strength, and taken the measure of our duty by our capacities. For all that he hath required of us as the condition of our eternal salvation is only this; that we should honestly endeavour to understand what he commands and forbids us, and that we should not live in the wilful neglect of any known duty, or in the wilful commission of any known sin: and if we do this, he hath engaged himself to make such a merciful abatement for our infirmities, and inadvertencies, and follies, and surprises, that they shall never rise in judgment against us, so as to exclude us from eternal happiness. So that now there can be nothing our duty that is naturally impossible; nothing necessary to our eternal happiness that is morally impossible; that is, that can [cannot] reasonably be expected from us, considering our state and circumstances: and what is neither of these, cannot be supposed to be very grievous and burdensome. For unless we account it hard that we are not left at liberty to be obstinate rebels to our God and Saviour, and with an audacious forehead to reject what they command, and pursue what they forbid; it is certain, there can be no such thing as a burden or grievance in our religion.

4. And lastly, To the rendering of God's commands easy to us, our Saviour hath contributed the promise of a glorious reward, upon condition of our sincere obedience. And this is such a vast contribution to the ease of our duty, as is sufficient to turn it all into jubilee and recreation. For when I seriously consider, that after I have spent a few moments here in the noble exercises of a sincere piety and virtue, I shall be translated into a region of im-

mortal pleasures; where, in the society of my God and Saviour, his angels and blessed spirits, I shall spend an eternity in one continued, uninterrupted act of rapturous love, and joy, and pleasure; where, in a perfect freedom from all the arrogancies of flesh and blood, and from all the vexations of an ill-natured world, I shall live as happily for ever, as all the joys of heaven can make me: in a word, where I shall have nothing else to do, but to converse with the most happy lovers, and to bear a part in that ravishing consort of praises and hallelujahs wherewith they laud and celebrate the Fountain of their happiness. I say, when I consider these things, methinks I am enabled, by those glorious hopes and expectations, to scorn and despise all difficulties; and, if need require, even to embrace the flames of martyrdom. But as for those gentle toils of watching and praying, of keeping a constant guard upon myself, and contending against the stream of my own depraved inclinations, Lord! how inconsiderable they appear to me! and how heartily do I pity those miserable, crest-fallen souls, that tamely suffer themselves to be frighted out of heaven by such harmless scarecrows! Thus, while I stand on the tiptoes of my hope, and see heaven at my journey's end, I overlook all rubs and hardships in my way, and pass on triumphantly, without minding them. And indeed, when the reward of our obedience is so great, so infinitely transcending the desert of it; I am astonished to think, that ever any reasonable being should be so shameless and immodest as to take any notice of those trifling difficulties that are in it: for with what conscience can we account any thing hard, the reward whereof is a crown of immortal glory?

How can our voyage be troublesome; when our port is the Indies of pleasure? No, no; the work can never be hard, that hath heaven for its wages; the very prospect whereof is enough to reconcile us to all the difficulties in the way to it; and to carry us through them, not only with ease, but with triumph. For he that hath heaven for his haven must be infinitely peevish, if he quarrels at a rough sea, and doth not bless the storms and winds that are driving him thither.

And thus I have proved to you at large, that the commands of God are not *grievous*; and that, both because they are easy in their own nature, and are made much more easy by our blessed Lord and Saviour.

But after all that hath been said, I do foresee a material objection that will be made against this discourse, and that is this, that it contradicts the universal experience of mankind. For do not the generality of those men, that have attempted a religious life, find by experience a great deal of difficulty? Are they not forced to strive and wrestle with themselves, and to do the greatest violence to their own inclinations? Are they not forced to keep themselves under a severe discipline, to pray earnestly, and watch diligently, to prevent the surprises and incursions of those temptations that continually waylay them wheresoever they are, and whatsoever they are about? And do they not many times find the difficulties so great, as that they are quite beaten off, and utterly disheartened by them?

All this, I confess, is very true, and may very well be so, without any prejudice to the argument in hand: for we have not been discoursing of what

religion may accidentally be, but of what it really is in itself. The light in itself is pleasant to the eye, but yet it may accidentally be grievous, if the eye be sore or weak, and not able to endure its splendour. And so religion, though in itself extremely easy, yet it may, and often doth, become accidentally difficult to us, by reason of those sinful prejudices against it, which we do too often contract in the course of a sinful life. But it is an unreasonable thing for men to measure the easiness of God's laws, not by their own intrinsic nature, but by the reluctancy and opposition which they find in their own hearts against them. For to a man in a fever every thing is bitter; but yet the bitterness is not in the honey he tastes, but in the gall that overflows his own palate. And so to a vicious man every virtue is a burden, but the burdensomeness is not so much in the virtue, as in his own repugnancy to bear it. For I have already proved at large, that religion is every way agreeable to human nature, and therefore there can be no other reason why it should not agree with us, unless it be, that we disagree with ourselves. We spoil our own natures, and do degenerate from the human nature into the brutal or diabolical; and what wonder is it, that the religion of a man should be a burden to a beast or a devil? But if we would take but a little pains to retrieve ourselves, and weed out those unnatural habits with which our nature is overgrown, we should find that our religion and that would very well accord; and then that which is our burden would become our recreation. I confess, before this can be accomplished, we must take a great deal of pains with ourselves; we must watch, and pray, and strive, and contend, and undergo the

severe discipline of a sorrowful repentance, if ever we mean to recover our natures again. But, for God's sake, consider, sirs, there is now no remedy for this, and you may thank yourselves for it; for you must undergo great difficulties, take which side you please. If you resolve to continue as you are, you must be most wretched slaves to your own lusts; you must tamely submit to all their most tyrannical commands, and run and go on every errand they send you; and though they countermand each other, and one sends you this way, and another the quite contrary; though sloth pulls you back, and ambition thrusts you forwards, and covetousness bids you save, and sensuality bids you spend; though pride bids you strut, and flattery bids you cringe, and there is as great a confusion in their wills and commands, as there was in the language of the bricklayers of Babel; and though, in such a huddle of inconsistencies, you are frequently at your wit's end, and know not what to do, yet you must be contented to endure the hurry; and if you cannot do all at once, you must do what you can; and when you have done so, it is a thousand to one but there will be as many of your lusts dissatisfied as satisfied: and in the mean time, while you are thus hurried about in the crowd of your own sinful desires, your wretched conscience will ever and anon be alarming you with its ill boding horrors, and griping and twinging you with many an uneasy reflection. Thus, like miserable galley-slaves, you must tug at the oar, work against wind and tide, and row through the storms and tempests of your own conscience; and all this to run yourselves upon a rock, and invade your own damnation. So that considering all, I dare say, the

toil of being wicked is much more insupportable than that of a holy life, and, which is sad to consider, it hath no other issue but eternal ruin: for *the wages of sin*, saith the apostle, *is death*, Rom. vi. 23. And methinks it should be very uncomfortable for a man to work so hard for nothing but misery, and even to earn his damnation with the sweat of his brows; especially considering that the toil and drudgery of a sinful life hath no end. For though custom and habit renders all other things easy, yet by accustoming ourselves to do evil, we add to our toil, and render those cruel taskmasters, our lusts, more tyrannical and imposing: for still the more we gratify them, the more craving they will be, and the more impatient of denial; and so by working for them, we shall but increase our own toil, and still acquire new degrees of labour and drudgery. But as for the main difficulty of religion, it chiefly lies in the entry to it: for there we must shake hands with all our darling lusts, and bid them adieu for ever; and to persuade ourselves throughly to this, is the main difficulty of all: for then, to be sure, they will cling fastest about us, and use their utmost oratory to stagger our resolution; and the old love we have borne them, and the dear remembrance of the pleasures which they have administered to us, will make our hearts relent, and our bowels yearn towards them.

But if with all those mighty arguments wherewith our religion and our reason furnishes us, and all those divine assistances which we are encouraged to ask, and if we do, are assured to obtain, we can but conquer our reluctances, and heartily persuade ourselves to part with them, this is the sharpest brunt

in all our spiritual warfare: for now, if we do but keep the ground that we have gotten, and maintain our resolution against the temptations that assault it, our lusts will every day grow weaker and weaker; and that pleasure and ease, that tranquillity of mind, and peace of conscience, which we shall feel accruing to us out of the discharge of our duty, will by degrees so endear and connaturalize it to us, that at last it will be much harder for us to sin, than to obey. Wherefore, let us stand no longer, like naked boys, shivering upon the brinks of religion, wishing that we were in, but afraid to venture; but let us consider seriously, resolve sincerely, and then leap in boldly; and though at first we may find it difficult to swim against the stream, and stem the tide of our own bad inclinations; yet, if we can but hold out courageously a while, we shall feel the current slacken by degrees, till the tide of nature turn, and run the contrary way: and then we shall be carried on with ease and delight, and swim cheerfully and pleasantly down with the stream. For when once we have conquered the bad inclinations of our nature, religion will be a mighty ease and refreshment to us; and we shall feel a thousand times more pleasure and satisfaction in it, than ever we did in all our sinful enjoyments: so that then we shall find the truth of the text, and be able to pronounce from our own experience, that *God's commandments are not grievous.*

DISCOURSE XIV.

UPON

PSALM CXIX. 68.

Thou art good, and thou doest good.

I HAVE been discoursing concerning the necessity of loving God, in order to our being truly religious; and shewed you at large that this is not only the great principle of all religion; but that, of all others, it is the most fruitful and operative. And now, that I may lay this foundation of true religion in you, I shall explain to you the infinite cause and reason that we have to love him. And because goodness is the beauty of a reasonable nature, and beauty is the object of love, I shall endeavour to demonstrate to you the infinite goodness of God, that I may thereby affect you with his beauty; and if possible, inflame all your souls with the love of him. And that I may the more fully convince you of the divine goodness, I shall endeavour to prove it from four distinct topics.

1. From the nature of God.
2. From the creation of God.
3. From the providence of God. And,
4. From the revelations he hath made to the world.

And these, I intend, shall be the arguments of four distinct discourses; the three first of which lie plainly in the text, *Thou art good, and thou doest good.*

Thou art good. That plainly denotes what God is in himself, that he is naturally and essentially good; that he is of a most loving, kind, and benevolent nature, and hath a most vehement propension to do good to others, founded in his immutable being. *Thou doest good.* That denotes the exercise and outgoing of this his essential benevolence in the works of his creation and providence; and that this his natural propension to do good is not at all sleepy or unactive; that it is not a lazy and restless woulding or volition; but that it always sallies forth into action, and doth most vigorously exercise itself, either in making of objects to employ itself about, or in upholding and governing them when they are made. So that the words contain these two things:

1. What God is in himself; *Thou art good.*

2. What he is in those actions that are determined without himself; *Thou doest good.*

1. I begin with the first of these, What God is in himself: *Thou art good*; i. e. Thou art so essentially, and according to the unalterable propension of thy nature. And this, as I told you, I shall in the first place endeavour to demonstrate from the nature of God; that is, from that entire complexion of all possible perfections whereof his nature is composed.

For in order to our handling of this argument, this must be premised, that God is a being endowed with all possible perfections, and consequently thereunto, that he is infinitely powerful and infinitely wise; and consequently to that, that he is infinitely happy; and consequently to this, that he loves himself infinitely: and that all this is so, is very evident from the nature of the thing. For first, we must

necessarily suppose one original cause of all things: for else he [we] can give no possible account how those things that once were not, could ever come into being; and we must also as necessarily suppose, that this original cause was self-originated, i. e. that it received its being and existence from none but itself: for else it cannot be the original cause; but must itself be the effect of some other cause that was in being before it: that existing of itself without any cause, it is infinitely removed from not-being: for that which is without any cause can ever be without any cause, merely from that exuberant fulness of essence that is in itself And that which can be for ever without any cause, must necessarily be so; because this is a most necessary act, and as such, must be exerted *ad extremum virium agentis*; consequently to which, we must also suppose, that that which is infinitely removed from not-being hath the utmost perfection of essence in it. For the notion of essence, naturally considered, is, to be; and therefore by how much the more remote any essence is from not-being, by so much the more perfect it must necessarily be. Again, in consequence to this, we must also suppose, that that which hath in itself, without any cause, the utmost perfection of essence, must have in itself also the utmost of all other perfections, that by way of adjunct or attribute such an inexhaustible essence is capable of; that is, that it must be powerful and wise, and whatsoever else is a possible perfection of essence. For plenitude of essence consists in being as much as it can be; and so long as any being is capable of being any more than it is, it hath not [at] all the possible degrees of essence in it: for every perfection that essence, by way of

attribute is capable of, is a degree of positive entity. Thus wisdom and power are not mere privations of weakness and folly, but things that have some degree of real positive essence in them; and consequently, what being soever hath not these, must necessarily have it in some degrees of not-being; and it is impossible that any essence should be infinitely removed from not-being, which hath any degree of not-being in it. Lastly, consequently to this, we must also suppose, that a being endowed with all possible perfections, being infinitely powerful and infinitely wise, must needs be infinitely happy: for wheresoever those great perfections are, they must necessarily supply whatsoever is necessary to an infinite happiness: and then from hence it necessarily follows, that a being that is thus infinitely happy must needs infinitely love and delight in itself; because within the vast circumference of its own being it hath every thing that it needs, desires, or affects. These are all plain and easy deductions; and seem as naturally to follow from one another, as the most immediate consequences do from first principles. This therefore being supposed, which you see is very reasonable, that God is infinitely powerful, and wise, and happy, and that because he is so he loves himself infinitely; I doubt not but from each of these it will naturally follow, that he is also infinitely good and benevolent.

1. He is infinitely powerful, and therefore he is good. For power is nothing but an ability to act, and action is the end of all ability for action; so that the greater any power is, the farther it must necessarily be removed from inactivity; and consequently, infinite power must be so infinitely removed

from it, that it cannot be supposed to exist without exercise; or if it could, yet it cannot be imagined that any being, in whom infinite power exists, should determine with itself, that the best use it could make of that power were to make no use of it at all; because such a being can with as much ease to itself act, as not act. And therefore, since every being doth necessarily delight in the exercise of its own perfections, it cannot be supposed, but a being infinitely powerful should necessarily delight in the exercise of its power, when it can as easily exercise it, as suffer it to sleep on in eternal inactivity; and consequently, when it can exercise its power more vigorously as easily as less, and can do more things as easily as fewer, it must necessarily choose to do it; because as the having of power inclines the agent to act, so the having of more power inclines it to act more vigorously. Wherefore, if the doing of good to others be a much greater exercise of power than the doing of evil, it will hence necessarily follow, that God, being infinitely powerful, must be infinitely prone to do good; because he cannot but be delighted in that whereby this great perfection of his nature is most vigorously exercised. But now for God to choose to employ his power in doing mischief to others, rather than good, will be to choose to do less, rather than to do more, when both are equally easy to him; and consequently, to lay a needless restriction upon the exercise of his power; and so far to render it useless and in vain. For in doing mischief to others, he must be supposed either wholly to annihilate them, or to make them miserable, and continue them so: but by doing good to others, he must be supposed either to uphold them

in those beings he gave them, or to perfect those beings; and thereby to render them as happy as their capacities will bear: and certainly, to do either of the latter is a much more vigorous exercise of power, than to do either of the former. For, for God to annihilate beings, or reduce them to nothing, is rather to withdraw his power from them, than to exercise it upon them; because that which is not of itself cannot continue to be of itself; it being, in the nature of the thing, as possible for a thing to be of itself in the first moment of its existence, as to be of itself in any moment of its duration. So that the continuance of our being, and the original of it, must necessarily be owing to the same power; and consequently, as our continuance in not-being must necessarily have followed upon the non-exercise of this power; so our relapse into not-being must as necessarily follow from the discontinuance of the exercise of this power. So that to our annihilation there needs no more than the bare suspension of the exercise of almighty power upon us, or a ceasing to uphold us in being: for to the upholding us in being, there is required a continued exertion of that creative power that first brought us into being: for if we can exist of ourselves this one moment, we might as well have done so the moment before, and may as well do so the moment after; and so backward and forward to all eternity. So that unless we had such an exuberant fulness of essence in us, as to exist of ourselves from all eternity past to all eternity to come, we cannot exist so much as one moment without new supplies of being from that infinite fountain whence we are originally derived; and that we are this moment, is as much the effect of God's power, as that we were that moment when

we first came into being. So that whereas, by annihilating us, God would choose to exercise no power at all, that is, to render his own omnipotence useless, by giving it a *quietus* from action; by upholding us in being, his power is still as vigorously exercised about us, as it was in the first moment of our creation: and therefore, by how much more suitable it is to infinite power to act than to be idle, by so much more suitable to it, it must necessarily be, to uphold us in our beings than to annihilate and destroy us.

And then, for making us miserable, and continuing us so, it is a much less vigorous exercise of power than to perfect our beings, and thereby to render us happy. And verily, should God turn the whole world into one entire globe of unquenchable fire, and continue its wretched inhabitants for ever weltering in flames, I should not look upon this as so great an act of omnipotence, as it is to perfect our rational nature, so as to render it immutably and eternally happy. For to the making of any being perfect and happy, there is required many more causes and many more acts, than there is to the making them miserable. For the greatest part of misery consists in the privation of happiness, and for God to deprive his creatures of happiness is not so much the exercise as non-exercise of his power: for then he deprives us of it, when he ceases to do any thing for us, and refuses to produce, or to contribute to the producing of what tends to our happiness: so that this part of misery consisting in a mere privation, is not so properly the effect of the exercise of power, as of the suspension of the exercise of power. So that unless we can suppose that the omnipotent Creator of the world chooses rather not to act, than to act, we must

necessarily suppose that he chooses rather to bestow happiness on his creatures, than to deprive them of it. And as for the positive part of misery, which consists in pain and torment, I dare appeal to any man, whether it be not much more easy to vex and torment any being, than it is to render it happy. For even a child can put a man, yea, an elephant to pain; but to make a sick man well, a poor man prosperous, a madman sober, or a fool wise, are such mighty things as do most commonly transcend all human power whatsoever. But then to retrieve such imperfect beings as we from the bondage of sense and sensuality; and, from being almost beasts, to raise us up by degrees to an equal height with angels; to fill, and thereby enlarge the narrow capacities of our natures, till by filling they are widened almost to infinity; and yet still to supply them with new degrees of happiness proportionable to their vast enlargements, is a work that highly deserves to be the eternal exercise of omnipotence itself.

Since therefore the end of power to act is action; and every thing naturally inclines to its end; and consequently the greater the power of any being is, the greater is its inclination to activity; and since the doing of good to others is a much greater exercise of power, than the doing of mischief; it hence necessarily follows, that God, being omnipotent, must thereby be infinitely inclined to do good, and that because doing good is infinitely the largest sphere of activity. So that if, when it is equally possible and easy for him to do good as not, he should choose not to do it, he would choose directly contrary to the necessary inclination of an omnipotent Being, which is to do that which is the greatest exercise of power.

2. God is infinitely wise, and therefore he is good. For the greatest wisdom consists in proposing the worthiest ends, and choosing the properest means to obtain them. Wherefore, if doing good to others be the worthiest end that God can propose to himself, it will necessarily follow, that by the infinity of his wisdom he is inclined to do good. For as his power inclines him to act, so his wisdom inclines him to act for the worthiest end; but doing good to others is evidently the worthiest end that God can be supposed to aim at: for it cannot be imagined that he can design any further good to himself, any new addition to the vast treasure of his happiness, which is so infinitely full that it can admit of no increase: so that whatsoever he doth besides the enjoying of himself, he cannot be supposed to do for any self-end; because he hath all that good already within himself that he can possibly either desire or aim at. So that all those actions of God, which are terminated without himself, must have either no end at all, (which cannot be supposed of the actions of an allwise agent,) or else they must have for their end either the happiness or the misery of others. But to make the misery of others their end is by no means consistent with his infinite wisdom. For to make pure abstracted evil the end of action, is so far from being infinitely wise, that it is impossible; because the very notion of an end necessarily includes good in it, either real or apparent; but God can reap no good from the misery of others, because he is infinitely happy already; and, to be sure, others can reap no good from that which God intends to be their misery: that that therefore should be God's end, which is no end, which hath nothing of the na-

ture of an end in it, implies a plain contradiction. So that to say, that the end of God's actions is the misery of others, is all one as to say, he acts for no end at all: and how an infinitely wise agent can be said to act at rovers, to do things without any level or aim, I cannot apprehend. But supposing it were possible that pure evil might be an end, yet it is as evident as the sun, that it cannot be the end of infinite wisdom: for infinite wisdom necessarily inclines to do that which is wisest; but if it were in itself indifferent to the Almighty, whether he did good or evil to others, yet his infinite wisdom would incline him to do good, because in the doing good there is much more wisdom exercised than in doing of evil. For what great skill doth it require in an almighty agent to make others miserable? If it hath a mind to turn them out of being, it is but withdrawing that almighty arm that upholds them, and they will presently sink into nothing of their own accord: but what great wisdom is there in it, thus to unravel his own workmanship, to weave a Penelope's web, and to do and undo eternally? And if he hath a mind to make them miserable, and continue them so, it is but suspending his own almighty influence, and refusing to concur to their happiness, and they will soon be as miserable as misery can make them. I confess, to invent an acute torture requires some skill; but yet we plainly see that a very little wit, joined with a great deal of malice and cruelty, is sufficient to make an exquisite tormentor; since even men of very ordinary understanding have invented as sharp torments as men are able to bear. So that for God to do evil requires very little contrivance; and consequently, is so far from being an exercise worthy

of his infinite wisdom, that not only a finite, but a very shallow understanding, armed with sufficient power and malice, can invent and inflict as exquisite tortures as is possible for any being to bear. But to the perfecting of beings, and rendering them happy, especially of free and rational beings, there is required a long series of rare and admirable contrivance; for, to the effecting of this noble end, there are so many impediments to be removed, so many concurrent means to be employed, such an incomparable skill required in the choice of such as are most fit and effectual, and methodizing them into such a regular connection with and dependence upon one another, as that they may all successively second and promote each other; that even the wisdom of God, how infinite soever it be, may here find scope and matter enough to employ and exercise itself for ever. And I dare appeal to any reasonable man, whether in that method of saving souls, which God hath revealed to us in his gospel, (though we cannot see all, because we are not able to discern the admirable connection it hath with the whole series of divine providence,) there be not infinitely more wisdom and rare contrivance than an omnipotent Being need to employ in effecting the greatest mischief imaginable; whether in the contriving of laws so suitable to and perfective of our nature, and in the composing such unanswerable reasons and motives to press and engage us to the observance of them; and in all that admirable series of providences, by which he seconds and forces those reasons, he hath not exercised incomparably more wisdom than he could have done in effecting the greatest evil in nature? As for example; suppose he should have designed to kindle some

mighty unquenchable flame in some dark and dismal recess of the world, with a resolution to hurl all reasonable beings into it, without any respect or consideration; this, doubtless, would have been as great a mischief as can well be imagined. But what contrivance doth it ask, for an almighty being to accomplish such a direful end? Could not he have roasted a little world of worms, and tortured a company of beings that are not able to resist him, without employing infinite wisdom in the management and contrivance of it? Or, which will as well serve my argument, could there have needed as much wisdom to design and effect this, as there did to contrive and manage the great methods of our salvation? Sure, no man can be so senseless as to imagine it. Well then, if God be infinitely wise, and doing the greatest good to others be a much higher exercise of wisdom than doing the greatest evil, it will hence necessarily follow, that even his infinite wisdom must needs incline him to do good. For as the end of power is to act, so the end of wisdom is to act wisely: and every thing, as I told you, inclines to its end; and consequently, the more wisdom it hath, the more wisely it is inclined to act. Wherefore since doing good is the greatest act of wisdom, God, who is infinitely wise, must needs be infinitely inclined thereunto.

3. God is infinitely happy, and therefore he is good. For God's infinite happiness doth necessarily exclude all want, all desire, and all prospect of any degree of happiness beyond what he enjoys; and where all these are excluded, there can be no self-end: for a self-end is some good desired and aimed at, which yet we are not possessed of; and if God

hath no self-end, he can have no end at all, but only to do good to others. But perhaps you will object, How can you say, that God hath no self-end, when the scripture so plainly tells us, that his glory is his end; and this end he doth as well obtain by doing hurt as by doing good to others; by damning of some, as well as by saving of others? To which I answer, that if by the glory of God, you mean any thing else but the free communication of his goodness to others, it is false to say that his glory is his end; and if this be his glory, then what I said is infallibly true, that the only end of God is to do good. But if you think that his glory consists in being praised and commended, admired and applauded by his poor impotent creatures; you have very mean conceptions of him, if you think that this is his last end. For what advantage is it to God, that we applaud and commend him? Can the praises and panegyrics of a small handful of breath either make him more glorious than he is, or more glorious in his own esteem? Alas! no; he is an infinite stage and theatre to himself, his prospect being every way adequate to his glory, and his glory as unbounded as eternity itself: so that if all his creation should join hearts and voices to extol and laud him, yet they could not add either one spark to his glory, or one degree to that infinite satisfaction he takes in it. So that when we have praised him as much as we are able, he is still but as glorious as he was before; and he still knows that he deserves infinitely more praises than we are able to render him. And how can it be imagined, that he who is so infinitely satisfied with himself, and hath such infinite reason for it, should find any need of our poor praises and commenda-

tions? And if he finds no need of it, how can he propose it to himself as the end of his actions, since the end of action is always some good, which yet we have not, but do desire to enjoy? It is true he doth command us to praise, and laud, and acknowledge him; but he commands us this, as he doth all other things, not for his own good, but for ours. He bids us extol and admire his perfections, that by that he might engage us to transcribe and imitate them; and so by glorifying him, to glorify ourselves: so that still the glory that he designs and aims at consists not in receiving any good from us, but in doing and communicating of good to us. And therefore, though it is true that God doth obtain this great end of his glory, as well in damning of some, as in saving of others; it is not because he doth good by it. For if he should damn and punish any being without any good reason, he could not expect so much as to be praised and commended for it; but if he doth it for good reason, it is because it is good either for himself or others. For himself it cannot be; for how can an infinitely happy being reap any degree of good from another's misery and punishment? And therefore it must be for the good of others, that they, by the example of those whom he punishes, may be warned from incurring those sins for which he punishes them, and from running away from their own duty and happiness. So that even the end of punishment is to do good; and this is the great glory that God aims at in doing it. And indeed, considering that God is infinitely happy, there is no other glory but this, that he can propose as the great and ultimate end of his actions. For all the inclination that is in any being, either not to do good, or to do

hurt to others, arises from indigence and insufficiency: either we envy or we covet the good which another enjoys; the former of which restrains us from adding any more good to him, as the latter excites us to deprive him of that which he is already possessed of; both which do apparently arise from want and indigence of good in ourselves. But now, in God there being no want of good, it is impossible there should be either envy or avarice in him; and both of these being excluded, there can be no temptation at all in his nature, either not to do good, or to do hurt to others. For we see among men, the more perfect and happy they are, the less good still they desire for themselves, and the more for others. Since therefore the great God is infinitely perfect and infinitely happy, it is impossible he should desire any good for himself; and therefore, if he act for any good at all, as he cannot but do, it must be for ours. For,

4. And lastly, God loves himself infinitely, and therefore cannot but be good. For whatsoever being loves itself, must necessarily love its own resemblance and likeness: for that which is lovely in us is lovely in another; and if there be any reason why we should love ourselves, there is the same reason why we should love another that resembles us in those things for which we love ourselves. It is true, we poor imperfect creatures do many times love ourselves without reason, out of a mere blind impetus, and necessary instinct of nature. But God, being infinitely wise, governs all his motions by the wisest rules, and doth every thing for the best and most excellent reasons; and consequently, doth not love himself, he cannot tell why, out of any blind unac-

countable instinct in his nature, but he loves himself so far only as he hath reason to do it; and it is because he hath infinite reason for it, that he loves himself infinitely: and the reason why he loves himself to that infinite degree that he doth, is because he is infinitely perfect, and so hath infinite reason to be delighted and satisfied with himself; and this being the reason, he cannot but love others that resemble him in that for which he loves himself. For though others cannot be infinitely happy as he is, yet they are happy in such a degree as their capacities will bear; and when they are so, he hath the same reason, though not so much, to love them, as he hath to love himself. And he that loves happiness in another as well as in himself, will not only love it where it is already, but be very much inclined to propagate it where it is not. So that this, I think, is a most plain case, that if perfection and happiness be the reason of God's love, he cannot but love it in another as well as in himself; and if he love it in another, he cannot but be inclined to contribute to the producing it. And therefore, unless we suppose God, contrary to the genius of all other beings, not to love his own resemblance, nor to be at all concerned to propagate it, we must necessarily suppose him to be good, or, which is all one, inclined to make others happy. And to say, that God loves happiness in himself, but yet that he affects to make others miserable, without any prospect of advantage to himself, is to say, that he loves contraries in different objects; that is, happiness in himself, and misery in others; which is to make his love to be guided by the extravagant impulses of a mutable fancy, and not by the steady rules of wisdom. But since it is impossible for any

being to love that which is contrary to himself, we may be sure that God cannot love misery, whose nature is so infinitely happy: and since I am sure that every being must love its own resemblance, if it love itself; I am as sure that God loves that others should be happy, as I can be that he is so himself.

And thus I have endeavoured, from the very nature of God, to demonstrate this great truth to you, that he is good; and plainly proved to you, that by all those infinite perfections which are the necessary results of his self-existence, he is most strongly and vehemently inclined to do good to others. And now to conclude all, we will briefly consider what use may be made of this discourse for the guidance and conduct of our lives and actions.

1. Then, if God be good, this may serve to support us under all the sad events that befall us in this world. For what greater satisfaction than this can any reasonable man desire, to be under the government of, and to have all his affairs disposed of by a God that cannot but be good? For now all events and accidents that befall us must be what God designs and intends them; because he hath the management and disposal of them all: and to be sure, a good God can never have an ill design upon his creatures. It is true, when his creatures prove malefactors, he may and doth chastise and punish them; but even in doing thus, he hath a most gracious and merciful design; namely, to reform the offender himself; or to make him a public example to all the rational world, that they may take warning by his ruin, and not run upon the rock that dashed him in pieces. And to punish offenders is as great an act of mercy to the public, as it is to reward the

loyal and obedient. For if out of a fond indulgence to insolent rebels he should let them go on in a state of impunity, the public would suffer a great deal more by it, than those rebels can do by a just and deserved punishment: for their impunity would embolden others to take the same courses; and so the contagion would run on without any stop, from one to another, till the whole were infected, and the plague of wickedness become epidemical to all the reasonable creation; and so by sparing a few, he would destroy a great many; and mercy to particulars, would be cruelty to the whole. But so long as we are honest and sincere in our obedience to God, we may be sure, that whatsoever befalls us in particular is intended for our good: for he cannot intend hurt to an honest soul, without doing open violence to his own goodness; because the hurt of such an one is a pure mischief; it can serve no good end; but is likely to prove a greater prejudice to the public, than it can be to the person that endures it: for as the impunity of great offenders will embolden others to offend; so the ruining of obedient subjects will discourage others from obeying. So that to design hurt or damage to a sincerely good man is to do mischief for its own sake; and this can proceed from nothing but pure abstracted malice, which is the very quintessence of a devil; but I am sure can have no room in the breast of our good God and merciful Father. I confess, in this life all things do fall out so alike to all, that it is impossible for us to judge of God's particular design and intention towards us, by the nature of the things that we suffer: and therefore, in this case, the only infallible course we can take is, throughly and impartially to examine

ourselves; and if, upon a serious review of our own hearts and ways, we can truly say, that we have been honest and sincere to God and to our duty, we may be as sure that he designs good to us in all those afflictions that he lays upon us, as we can be that there is such a being as God in the world. And if for the time past we should find that we have been bad, and false, and hypocritical; yet since God still continues us in this life of trial, and permits us the privilege of being candidates and probationers for the heavenly preferments; we may safely conclude, from the goodness of his nature, that whatsoever he doth to us, he designs as no harm: for how can it be imagined, that the good God should design our misery at that very time when he continues us in a probation for happiness? Wherefore let us cheerfully undergo whatsoever he lays upon us, concluding, that there is nothing but good can come from a good God; that even his punishments are cordial, and all his rods dipped in love; and though they may smart severely, and fetch blood from our very hearts, yet let us determine with ourselves that they must be good or bad, according as God intends them; and that the good God must needs intend them for good.

2. Is God thus naturally and essentially good? Then this may serve for an excellent standard whereby to judge of our opinions in religion. For most opinions in religion have either a near or remote tendency to the honour and dishonour of God's goodness: and though I will not say, that every opinion is true that seems to extol and advance the goodness of God; yet I am sure, that every opinion must be false that doth either directly, or by true conse-

quence, deny or disgrace it. For let our opinions be true or false, yet this I am sure is eternally true, that God is good; and while I am sure of this, I can never believe any doctrine true, that thwarts and contradicts it, because I am sure, that from truth there is nothing but truth can be inferred throughout the longest train of deductions. This therefore we ought to be infinitely cautious of, how we entertain any opinion whatsoever that seems but to clash with the goodness of God: for if it but seem to do so, we are bound, by all the zeal we owe to the divine goodness, to suspect it of falsehood, or at least not to be over confident of its truth, till we see it fairly acquitted of that foul imputation. For to preserve in our minds consistent opinions of the goodness of God, is a thing that we ought to be as careful of as of the apple of our own eyes; because an ill opinion of God is a flaw in the very foundation of our religion and our comfort; and it will be impossible for us to serve him long, either with sincerity or with pleasure, if we do not firmly believe him to be a good master.

3. Is God thus naturally and essentially good? Then this may serve to hearten and encourage us in his service. For to be sure so good a master will never prove unkind to any faithful servant; that he will not burden us above our strength, but most freely contribute to us all the assistance that is necessary to enable us to our duty; that he will not be angry with us for trifles and punctilios, but consider our weakness, and pity our follies, and make the most candid interpretation of our actions, and finally judge us by the measures of a friend; that when we wilfully miscarry, he will not cast us

off for ever, but will be entreated by our repentance, and appeased by our amendment, and graciously receive us again into his mercy and favour; that he will not be narrow and stingy in the recompense of our duty to him; but reward us a thousandfold with such immense glories and beatitudes, as shall make us for ever bless the moment we entered into his service. All these things we may confidently conclude and build upon, from the transcending goodness of his nature. And what greater encouragement can we expect or desire? Why then are we afraid, O foolish souls that we are! why are we afraid to engage in his service? Where can we hope to find a more gracious, compassionate, and bountiful master, one that will be more ready to help and to pity, to pardon and reward us? If there be any equal rival between God in all the world, any in whose service you can engage yourselves with equal hopes and encouragements, go on and prosper in the service of that great rival. But if God be infinitely the best master in the world, as doubtless he is, why do we stand debating the case any longer? why do we not run at least as cheerfully to his service, as we would to the greatest advancement that any mortal prince can tender us? In the name of God, sirs, be once so wise as to consult your own interest, and do not stand any longer in your own light. Behold, the great and good God stands ready to entertain you, and condescends to invite you to the most glorious service that ever was; a service that is most easy and reasonable, that is intermixed with infinite pleasure and sweetness, and crowned with the reward of all that an everlasting heaven means. Wherefore, as you love yourselves, and value your own welfare,

resolve once for all, with those in the prophet, *Other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but thee only, our good God, will we now serve.*

4. And lastly, From hence I infer, that it is an unreasonable thing for men to suspect the goodness of God, because of some uncertain appearances in the world to the contrary. For from the very principles of God's nature, we are certainly assured that he must be good, which is the highest demonstration that things are capable of: and therefore to suspect his goodness upon the account of some little appearances to the contrary, is to confront demonstrations with slender probabilities, and overrule a certainty with a doubtful guess. And yet how common is it for men to arraign the goodness of God, merely upon the account of some visible effects of his power, which to their narrow apprehensions seem hurtful and mischievous; as if we had such an entire prospect of all the relations and tendencies of God's actions, as that none could possibly appear either good or evil to us but what is really so. Whereas, God knows, we are a company of miserable shortsighted creatures, and are not able to see from the beginning to the end of any one action in all the train of God's providence: so that though this or that action may appear evil to us, considered singly and in the present effects of it, yet in itself it may be highly good, considering what a dependence it hath upon what went before, and what a tendency it hath to what is to follow after. For God, by his infinite comprehension having all things present and before him, hath so ranked and disposed them, that from first to last they are all but one complicated and orderly united means to

bring about those great ends which he first designed and intended; and, consequently, all the passages in the world, in his providential dominion over them, have a strict and mutual dependence on each other, and so cannot be judged of singly and apart from one another, there being no one action but relates to millions of others; yea, to all others, from the first to the last link of action in the whole chain of providence. And therefore for us to measure the goodness of God's providence in general, by those particular parts of it that lie before us, is just as if a man should judge of a whole consort of music, only by hearing three or four notes of a well composed lesson; whereas the whole harmony consists in a well composed mixture of a thousand notes and discords, wherein all the particulars are so interwoven, as that the several notes united in one lesson have a most excellent symmetry and proportion to one another. For in the whole consort of the divine Providence, there are a thousand discords, which, to us who hear them singly and apart from the rest, do many times yield an ungrateful sound; whereas, could we discern but the whole composure, and hear how elegantly all those discords are mingled into one entire harmony, we should never be able to forbear admiring the skill, and adoring the wisdom and goodness, of the great Harmostes. But since it is so impossible for us to discern all the connections and tendencies of God's actions, how unreasonable is it for us to censure the goodness of his nature, because there are some actions of his, and some effects of some actions, whose goodness at present we are not able to discover! Wherefore, if we have either rea-

son or modesty in us, we ought to be satisfied with those arguments of his goodness that are drawn from the principles of his nature: and though we cannot account for the goodness of all his actions in particular, yet firmly to resolve, that nothing but good can come from a good God.

DISCOURSE XV.

UPON

PSALM CXIX. 68.

Thou art good, and thou doest good.

I PROCEED to the second part of the text, viz. the operations of God, that flow from the immutable goodness of his nature, *Thou doest good:* and these, as they flow from the goodness of God's nature, so they are plain proofs and indications of it. For as the nature of things is demonstrable by their effects as well as their causes, so the goodness of God may as well be demonstrated by the operations it exerts, and the effects it produces in the world, as by those principles and perfections of his nature, from whence it necessarily arises. And it is as certain, that that being must be good, that hath all the necessary causes and principles of goodness in it: for if it were indifferent to the Almighty, whether he did good or evil, he would doubtless either retire from action, and do neither, or else he would do as much mischief as good: or if he were inclined to do ill, he would do it, and not force himself to act contrary to his own inclinations.

Wherefore, since he doth good so constantly and so universally, he can neither be supposed to be averse nor indifferent to it: and if he be neither of these, his doing good must necessarily proceed from the immutable inclination of his nature thereunto. If therefore we can prove, from the whole

course and series of God's operations, that he doth good, it will be an infallible argument that he is so.

Now all those operations of God that pass out of himself, and terminate upon others, are reducible to creation and providence: both which will afford us abundant instances of the truth of the text, that *God doeth good.*

I. I begin with the first, viz. creation, in which it is apparent that God hath done an infinite deal of good. And hence the Psalmist tells us, *that the whole earth is full of the goodness of the Lord,* Psalm xxxiii. 5. So also Psalm civ. 24. *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches,* [i. e. the riches of his goodness,] and *so is the great and wide sea.* And God himself, after his great work of creation, upon a general survey of the whole fabric of beings, pronounces all to be *very good,* Gen. i. 31. But to demonstrate more particularly the great goodness that God hath expressed in his creation, I shall briefly give you these four instances of it:

1. That whatsoever beings are incapable of happiness in themselves, he hath made them, so far as they can be, subservient to the happiness of others.

2. That he hath given actual existence to all kinds of beings that are capable of any degree of happiness.

3. That he hath furnished them with all the sufficient means and abilities to obtain the utmost happiness that they are capable of.

4. That in all those beings that are capable of happiness, he hath implanted a natural disposition of doing good to others.

1. That whatsoever beings are capable of happiness in themselves, he hath made them, so far as they can be, subservient to the happiness of others. For it is impossible, that all beings that are capable of happiness could ever have been actually happy, had not God created some beings that are utterly incapable of it. For thus all the heavenly bodies, the air, and earth, and fire, and water, are beings utterly incapable of happiness; they being all inanimate, and consequently void of all sense and perception, either of happiness or misery; but yet it cannot be denied, but they are indispensably necessary to the happiness of a world of animated beings that are capable of some degrees of happiness. Thus, for instance, the happiness of all sublunary things, of men and beasts, of the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, depends in a great measure on those dead inanimated elements; and therefore, if God had not created some being incapable of happiness, there are many beings that are capable of it must either have not been, or have been miserable. And therefore God hath not only created these, but, out of his great goodness to his living creatures, he hath created them in such an order, as renders them as subservient as they can be to their welfare and happiness. Thus the sun, whom God hath ordained the universal foster-father of all sublunary beings, though he feels no happiness himself, is created by our great Benefactor in such a form, and put in such a course of motion, as renders him most serviceable to all those animated beings that are capable of happiness. For first, he is created of a fiery substance, by which he not only enlightens this lower world, but warms and cherishes it with a fruitful and vigorous heat.

And then God hath cast all its mighty substance into the figure of a perfect globe, that so if the earth moves round it, it might be able to communicate the comfort of its light and heat to it, throughout all the circle of its motion; or, that if it moves round the earth, it may by its figure, which is most apt for motion, be the better enabled to walk his rounds about the world, and so visit all his foster-children, and refresh them with his light and warmth, as oft as their necessities require. And then for his situation in the world, what an exact care hath the good Father of beings taken to place him in such a convenient distance, as that he might neither be too near to us, nor too far from us; both which would have been equally mischievous. For had he been advanced higher in the heavens, he would have left us continually frozen and benighted; had he been thrust lower, he would have perpetually scorched us with the too near neighbourhood of his flames. But from that orb wherein he is placed all his aspects on us are benign; and, thanks be to a good God! we neither want his heat nor light, nor are we scorched and dazzled by it. For if God had not been very careful of the public good, he might as well have fixed the sun in the orb of the moon, as where it now is; and then, as its nearness to us would have turned the world into a torrid zone, so it would have run through the whole zodiack in the space of a month, and, consequently, the four seasons, winter and summer, and spring and autumn, which do now fill up the circle of the year, would have been all thrust together in four weeks; by means whereof, as all living creatures would have been very much prejudiced by the frequent changes

of the air, so all vegetation must have necessarily ceased. For the winter frost must have killed the fruits of the earth before ever the summer's heat could have ripened them; and the fruits of the earth being destroyed, all living creatures must have perished with famine. Since then there are an infinite number of other places in the heavens wherein God could have fixed the sun, if he had pleased, but none so commodious for the world as that where it is; what could move him to choose this above all others, but only his great care of the welfare of his creatures? Once more, if we consider the course of its motion, how could it have been more exactly ordered than it is, for the public benefit of the inhabitants of the world? For whereas in itself it was as apt to move in a direct line as in a circle, which if it had done, only one half of the earth could have been warmed and enlightened by it, whilst the other had been covered with eternal frost and darkness; the good God hath appointed him to run about the globe, and that with so much swiftness, notwithstanding he is so vast a body, that once in twenty-four hours he brings day into both the hemispheres: and whereas, had he always moved round in the same middle circle, without ever swerving either southward or northward, all those vast tracts of earth that lie beyond the polar circles would have been well nigh lost in an everlasting winter, and consequently their wretched inhabitants condemned to famine and cold; the good God hath chalked him out those oblique paths of the zodiack, in which in the summer he travels towards the northern, and in the winter towards the southern hemisphere; and so once a year brings a warm summer to them both. Thus

God hath placed the sun in the heaven as his almoner, and furnished him with all the advantages he is capable of, to relieve the necessities of his creatures; and every morning he visits us from his bountiful Master, and with his kindly influence ripens the fruits of the earth for us, and comforts us with the warmth and brightness of his rays. And though he receives no happiness himself, yet is so framed, and placed, and moved by the *Father of lights*, that he abundantly administers to the happiness of others.

And the same may be said of the moon, which is a kind of deputy sun, to supply his place in the night; and by the moist warmth it diffuses, to promote the generation and growth of all vegetable beings. And that it may do this the more effectually, its motions are not confined, like the sun's, within the tropicks; but in pity to those poor animals that dwell nearer towards the poles, the good God hath sent her some degrees farther to visit them in their long uncomfortable nights, and supply the sun's absence from them, and temperate the cold and darkness that covers them, with the warmth and brightness of her beams. And accordingly, when the sun goes southward, she draws nearer towards the northern; when northward, towards the southern pole; as if she pitied those poor regions that are thus forsaken of the sun, and so went in pure charity to those fatherless and bewidowed animals that inhabit them, to supply his absence with her own vicarious light. But it would be endless to recite the vast commodities we receive from the other heavenly bodies, and what infinite care the good God hath taken, so to order and direct the course of their mo-

tion, as that those beings that are capable of happiness might be most benefited by them.

But then, if from hence we descend into the air, how proper a medium is this fluid and transparent element to convey to us the light and influences of the heavenly bodies! What a convenient volary is it for feathered animals! For being the most fluid of all bodies, it easily gives way to the vibration of their wings; and so, that as that air that is under them bears them up, so that which is before them is no hinderance to their motion. In a word, how necessary is it to supply and refresh the spirits of all animals in general; which if they did not suck in new air almost every moment, would immediately be suffocated.

Again, if from the air we descend to the earth, how liberally hath the good God impregnated its vast womb with the seeds and principles of all those herbs, and flowers, and plants, and minerals, that can be any ways subservient to the happiness of those numerous animals wherewithal it is peopled! Insomuch that it is become a general magazine of provisions, not only for the necessities, but for the delights of its inhabitants.

Thus also the sea, that vast continent of water, is so contrived by the almighty Creator, that it not only administers to the sustenance and delight of its own inhabitants; but also to the happiness of all other animals. For from its vast treasury of waters it sends forth fruitful streams into all parts of the earth, through divers holes that are bored at convenient distances; and forces them to climb up to the tops of mountains, not only that they may be able to run down again with ease; but also to carry

themselves to such heights afterwards, as the necessities of men and beasts do require: so that even the most inland parts of the earth are made fruitful by their moistures, and all their thirsty inhabitants are watered and refreshed by them. Besides which, it is also most highly useful for navigation; whereby the remotest parts of the world maintain an easy correspondence, and do mutually change the commodities of life with one another.

Lastly, if we consider the fire, what a most useful servant hath the great Creator rendered it to mankind; for by this we do not only supply the absence of summer; but do also prepare all our food, and render it wholesome and pleasant, and most successfully serve ourselves in all arts and manufactures.

Thus I have briefly touched upon all the visible creation of inanimate beings; and shewn you how careful the great and good Creator hath been to improve them all to the utmost to the happiness of his animated creatures; that so there might no necessary supply be wanting to complete those several degrees of happiness for all beings in the world; and none might be miserable, but those who choose to be so. What a noble instance is this therefore of the immense goodness of God, in this work of creation, that he hath made all beings that are incapable of happiness, to minister, as much as they are able, to those that are capable of it; and thereby spread his table with an infinite variety, not only of necessaries, but of delicacies, to treat and entertain all his sensitive creation! Who can suspect his goodness, when the heavens and all the elements do so loudly proclaim it by their being so contrived and

ordered by his wisdom, as to do the utmost good they are able to those things that have any capacity of happiness!

2. Another instance of his doing good in this great work of his creation, is his giving actual existence to such innumerable kinds of being that are capable of happiness. Were we but able to survey the whole scale of beings, from the lowest of sensitive to the highest of rational, we should doubtless find in it such an innumerable company of rounds, as all our arithmetic could never be able to compute. For we see, that even this earth, which is but a very little spot of the world, contains in it such a prodigious army of distinct kinds of sensitive beings, as all the histories of animals were never able to muster: and could we but reckon down from man to the lowest mite of animated matter that the earth and sea contains, we should find, that even here there are so many kinds of beings as are capable at least of some degrees of happiness, as would give us cause enough to admire and adore the infinite fecundity of the divine goodness. And is it like, that this earth, which is but the sink of the world, should be the only inhabitable part of it? That since the Almighty hath so well stocked this little enclosure, he should for ever leave desolate of inhabitants all those immense tracts of pure ether in which the planets and fixed stars do swim? That when he hath so thronged this dark cellar with living creatures, he should make no use at all of those vast and glorious rooms, but let them stand empty for ever; as if he had erected them only for pomp and show, without any design to people them with such noble inhabitants as they are capable to receive? Well then, let us but sup-

pose, as we may very fairly do, that the other parts of the world are stocked with living creatures but in the same proportion with this; and then what an innumerable drove of distinct kinds of being will the whole consist of! And indeed, considering what infinite degrees of being are within the sphere of God's omnipotence, and how suitable it is to his goodness, in his productions to reach the utmost limits of possibility, it seems no way unreasonable to believe that he hath given actual existence to all possible kinds of being that are capable of life and happiness, and can, without any prejudice, either to themselves or neighbours, be contained within the compass and immensity of the world; and consequently, that he hath not only filled with living creatures the earth, and air, and sea, but, if it be possible, all the capacities of an immense and infinite space. But whether this be so or no, it is an abundant evidence of the goodness of God, that he hath created such innumerable kinds of living creatures, the meanest of which are capable of some degree of happiness. For unless we will assert one of the greatest absurdities in our modern philosophy, that all sensitive animals are nothing but mere machines, and consequently have no sense or perception in them; we must allow them all, even to the smallest insect, a capacity of some degree of happiness. For whatsoever hath sense is sensible of pleasure; and whatsoever is sensible of pleasure is capable of happiness; and he that made so many beings capable of happiness, to be sure never intended that their capacities should be in vain. Behold then the vast design and project of the divine goodness, that would let nothing lie buried in the abyss of nonentity, whose idea included

but a possibility of being happy, and hath given actual existence unto all kinds of beings, even the most inconsiderable animals, for which it was better to be than not to be; that at least hath raised up an innumerable company of beings into a capacity of being happy, and made such ample provision to supply their natures with all the degrees of happiness that they are capable of! For,

3. Another instance of his doing good in this great work of creation, is his furnishing all these beings with sufficient means and abilities to obtain the utmost happiness that they are capable of. For I have already shewn you, that God hath so made and ordered the inanimate world, that it administers sufficient matter of happiness unto all sensitive beings; that the heavens and the elements, by the ordination of God, do all conspire together to contribute to our happiness, to warm and refresh us, to feed and clothe us, and to render our lives, not only supportable, but pleasant and delightful. And of this vast contribution, every animal, even the most minute, hath its share: so that now they can want nothing that is necessary to their happiness, but only an ability to use and apply the liberal provisions that God hath made for them: and this he hath also most graciously furnished them with. For in all brute creatures God hath implanted a natural instinct, by which they are strongly inclined to that which is good for them, and as strongly averse to what is hurtful and injurious: so that by their very natures he hath impelled them to make use of those provisions which he hath made for their happiness: and he hath also furnished them with a natural sagacity to provide against want; and with fitting instruments of

sense to relish and enjoy the several pleasures which he hath prepared to entertain them. All which he hath done to that vast advantage, that it is impossible for human wisdom to say how any one kind of animals could have been more exactly framed for the enjoyment of such a happiness as is proper to its nature. But then, for us men, that are capable of much more than a mere sensitive happiness, he hath not only prepared such a happiness as is proportionable to our capacities, but hath also implanted in our natures a full ability to obtain it. For as for our sensitive happiness, there is sufficient provision made for it in the common storehouse of nature; and by the industry, and the good use of our reason, we may ordinarily secure ourselves, if we please, from the want of whatsoever is necessary thereunto: for a very little of these sensitive enjoyments is enough to make a wise man happy; and we want no bodily organs or sensories to relish any of those pleasures of which our sensitive happiness is composed. And then for our supreme happiness, as we are reasonable beings, God, by giving us reason, and understanding, and freedom of choice, hath furnished us with sufficient ability to obtain it. For our happiness, as we are reasonable creatures, consists in the most perfect exercise of our noblest faculties, viz. our understanding and our will: and there is no object in nature about which these faculties can be perfectly exercised but only God; who is the fountain of all truth and goodness, and consequently, our happiness, as men, must consist in the enjoyment of God; that is, in knowing, and loving, and resembling him for ever.

And in order to our obtaining of this, God hath

furnished us with understanding, by the good improvement of which, we may easily arrive to the knowledge of him: for he hath placed us so advantageously in being, that, as from a convenient station in a noble theatre, we are able to contemplate the admirable schemes of those magnificent works which God hath set round about us; and from the vastness of the structure, the variety of its parts, and the beautiful order which appears in their admirable connection, we can easily infer, that such a noble production must needs be owing to an almighty skill and goodness. And then, such is the frame of our natures, that we easily love that which we know to be lovely; and consequently, if we are not prejudiced by preternatural lusts, that which we behold of God in his works will imprint such an amiable notion of him in our minds, as will provoke us to imitate those beauties for which we love him; we being naturally ambitious of transcribing those perfections into ourselves which we love and admire in another; and then by imitating him we shall by degrees be moulded into his likeness and resemblance: for acts will beget inclinations, inclinations will grow into habits, and habits will become our nature.

So that you see God hath implanted an ability of knowing, and loving, and resembling himself in the very frame and structure of our natures: these things we are as capable of, as of any thing whatsoever that is rational and manly; we are as capable of knowing God, as of knowing any thing that is knowable; as capable of loving him, as of loving any thing that is amiable; as capable of resembling him, as of imitating any thing that is imitable: and these

are the noblest and most essential parts of the happiness of a rational nature. Now what an undeniable instance is this of the goodness of God, that he hath not only made so many kinds of beings capable of so many different degrees of happiness, but that he hath furnished them all with such abundant means and abilities to obtain it! O blessed God, what heart can be so stupid and insensible, as not to admire and adore thy exuberant goodness, which hath thus extended itself to the utmost borders of entity, and blessed with his overflowing streams such an infinite number of beings! What tongue is able sufficiently to praise and extol thy benignity, that out of thine own immense fulness hast supplied such a vast creation with such capacities, and such means, and such abilities of being happy!

4. And lastly, Another instance of his doing good in this great work of creation, is his implanting a natural inclination of doing good to others in all those beings that are capable of happiness. For it being his design to propagate this sort of beings by way of generation to the end of the world; he hath implanted in all parents, as well sensitive as rational, a natural love and good-will to their offspring; and that to such a degree, as we see the most timorous and helpless creatures are not only very industrious to nurse and cherish them, but very courageous in their defence and preservation; which is a great instance of the indulgent care which the great Father of beings hath of all his children; that he hath committed them in their infancy to such tender nurses, that will be sure to take care to make provision for them, when they are not able to provide for themselves; that he hath not trusted them to the com-

passion and good-nature of other beings, to be maintained by the alms and free benevolence of their fellow-creatures; but hath taken security for their liberal nurture and education from the very nature and inmost bowels of their parents; who were so framed, that they cannot choose but make provision for them, if they are able, without doing the greatest outrage to themselves, and stifling one of the strongest inclinations of their natures: which inclination of natural parents doth therefore loudly proclaim the infinite goodness of the great Parent of all things to his children; because there can be no other reason assigned why he should implant this inclination in our natures, but because he loved us, and was therefore resolved to take the most effectual course, that care might be taken of us, when we were not capable to take care of ourselves. And can we think, that the supreme Father, who hath implanted in all natural parents such a necessary inclination to do good to their children, should be forgetful and regardless of his own offspring? *He that planted the eye, shall not he see?* and *he that gave the ear, shall not he hear?* And by the same reason, he that hath so strongly inclined our natures to the love of our offspring, shall not he love his own? Shall not his nature be as strongly inclined to do good to them? For the whole creation being nothing else but the expansion, or spreading forth of the divine simplicity and perfection, all creatures do more properly belong to God, than families or actions do to the principles from whence they flow: so that we are, as it were, *flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone;* and *no man*, saith the apostle, *hateth his own flesh, but rather nourishes and cherishes it.* And

if man doth not, can we imagine that God doth? For as for man, we see, the more perfect he is, and the more suitable to his nature he acts, the more he is inclined to do good; and that not only to his own, but to all others that are within the sphere of his beneficence. He finds in himself such a diffusive and all-spreading principle of love, as renders him an universal friend and benefactor to the world, and makes him sympathise in the happiness and misery of all beings: and this brave temper of mind is doubtless one of the highest perfections that the soul of man is capable of. Since therefore originally we came no otherwise to the knowledge of God's perfections, than as we found them copied out and transcribed into our own natures, how can we imagine that God should not be inclined to universal love and beneficence, when we acknowledge it a perfection in ourselves to be so? Can there be any perfection in us that is not in God in the utmost degree of possibility? And therefore, if the inclination to do good be a perfection in us, it must needs be in God in all the possible degrees that an infinite nature is capable of. And since he hath so framed all reasonable natures, that universal love and proneness to do good is one of their greatest perfections and accomplishments, we may be sure that his own, which is the great standard and pattern of all reasonable natures, is infinitely loving, and prone to do good. And thus you see, what mighty unanswerable instances there are of the goodness of God in the works of his creation.

Wherefore, to conclude this argument, from hence we see what mighty obligations we are under to serve and obey, so far as we are able, the great and

good Author of our beings, who hath not only created us, but created us in a vast capacity of happiness, and furnished us with sufficient means and abilities to attain it. Wherefore, since all our powers and abilities are from him, we are bound in justice to employ them in his service: and since by giving us those abilities he hath done us so much good, and rendered us capable of such immense degrees of happiness, we are obliged, in gratitude, not to employ them in doing any thing that is any ways displeasing or dishonourable to him. For what can be more just or reasonable, than that God should have the use of those powers which he gave us, and in which he still retains an unalienable right and property? that the temples which he hath built should be for ever dedicated to his service, and not turned into dens of thieves, or made stables of filth and uncleanness? So that for us to withdraw ourselves from his service, or to employ our powers to any wicked purposes, is to commit a robbery upon the Author of our beings, and most unjustly to disseize him of his own goods; wherein he hath a far more absolute propriety, than we pretend to have to the clothes on our backs. And in every bad action we do, we steal God's own powers and faculties from him, and with extreme injustice employ them against himself. Now what a monstrous thing is it, that we, who think ourselves so highly affronted when any one charges us with robbery and injustice, should make no more conscience of robbing God, and alienating from him those faculties and powers of action, in which he hath a far more undoubted propriety than any creature can have in any good it enjoys: but when he hath been so good a creator to us, as

to create in us such an ample capacity of being happy, and furnished us with such abundant means and abilities of attaining thereunto; then to eloigne ourselves from his service, and to pervert those powers of action to sinful purposes, by which he hath enabled us to be happy, is not only unjust, but barbarously ungrateful. For now in sinning against God, we fight against him with his own mercies, and arm the effects of his bounty against his sovereignty; and, as if we were resolved to revenge ourselves upon him for making us so good, and raising us up into such an excellent state of nature, we shamefully dishonour him with his own blessings, and take all advantages we can to grieve and offend him, from the very means and abilities which he hath given us to be happy. He gave us reason and understanding, to discern what is good for ourselves, and liberty of will, to choose and embrace it; and we, like ungrateful wretches, employ that reason and liberty in contriving and choosing the highest treason against him. He gave us powers and abilities of action, that so we might not only discern and choose what is best for us, but might also pursue and obtain it; but we, like base caitiffs, exert those abilities in grieving and offending our most gracious Benefactor. Wherefore, be astonished, O ye heavens, and be horribly afraid, O ye works of God! for whilst you are all obedient to the laws of your Maker, and never swerve from those lines of motion he hath prescribed you; we, whom he hath advanced to the highest class of beings, and endowed with the largest capacities and abilities of being happy, are become so base and so shameless, as to

injure him with his own gifts, and to convert his very blessings into weapons of rebellion against him. Wherefore, unless we are ambitious of rendering ourselves the most absolute monsters both of injustice and ingratitude; unless we have a fancy to aspire to a perfection in baseness, and to rival the devils themselves in the most infamous and ignominious degrees of wickedness; let us employ all our faculties and abilities for action in the service of him from whom we received them, and exercise his gifts in a perpetual acknowledgment of his goodness.

DISCOURSE XVI.

UPON

PSALM CXIX. 68.

Thou art good, and thou doest good.

I HAVE already handled two of those four topics, from whence I intended to demonstrate the goodness of God, viz. his nature, and the works of his creation: of the first of which I discoursed upon the former part of the words, *Thou art good;* of the second, upon the latter, *Thou doest good.* But now, because the doings or operations of God include his providence, as well as his creation; and God doth good in that, as well as in this; no doubt but the Psalmist in these words had a respect to the one, as well as the other.

I proceed therefore to the third topic, from whence it doth most evidently appear; and that is, his providence. *Thou doest good;* i. e. Thou doest good in the great works of thy providence; and thereby thou dost manifest the goodness of thy nature, in that, as thou didst create a world to great and good purposes, so thou dost still continue to do good to it, in upholding and governing it by a most gracious providence.

Now in the management of this argument I shall do these two things:

I. Give you some general and comprehensive instances of God's doing good in the works of his providence.

II. That though there may be some things in the

world that to us seems to be very ill and hurtful; yet it is infinitely unreasonable for us to suspect the goodness and beneficence of the divine Providence.

First, I shall give you some general and comprehensive instances of God's doing good in the works of his providence: and they are these four:

1. His upholding things in that good course and order wherein he first created them; excepting only when the public good of his creatures requires him to interpose.

2. His continuing mankind under an awful sense of religion, notwithstanding the great degeneracies of human nature.

3. His supporting of government in the world, notwithstanding the violent tendency of our corrupt nature to anarchy and confusion.

4. His contributing to the invention and improvement of all those useful arts and sciences that are in the world.

1. His upholding things in that good course and order wherein he first created them, excepting only when the public good of his creatures requires him to interpose. That that order and course of things which God hath first established in his creation was exceeding good and beneficial to it, I have proved at large in my former discourse; and that God still continues the same good-will to us is apparent; since he still continues things in the same beneficial course and order wherein he first created them. For we see the heaven and elements still as kind to us as ever; the sun, moon, and stars do still run the same courses, and still they cherish and refresh us with the same benign influences: and though for six thousand years

together, they have been perpetually visiting us, and spending the liberal alms of their great Creator upon us; yet to this day they are neither wearied nor exhausted; but still continue to do us good with the same freedom and vigour, as when they first danced round the world, and sang together for joy. The fire, and air, and earth, and water, are still as liberal to us as ever; and do supply us with the same necessaries of life, as they did from the first moment of their being: and though, for so many ages, we, and innumerable other animals, have been liberally maintained out of all these vast storehouses of nature; yet still we find them replenished with an inexhaustible fulness. So that still not only the earth, but all the other elements are full of the goodness of the Lord; yea, and though in their qualities they are quite contrary to one another, yet are their animosities so tempered by the gracious providence of Heaven, that all live together like brethren in unity: and the dryness of this drinks not up the moisture of that; nor doth the cold of the one quench the heat of the other. The fire invades not the air, nor the water the earth; but every one keeps within its proper bounds: and though in sundry places the water be above the earth, yet, contrary to its own nature, which is to flow and expatiate itself, it doth only overlook its banks, but doth not overflow them; being bounded by that merciful Providence, which, in mere pity to the inhabitants of the earth, says to its proud waves, *Hitherto shall ye go, and no further.* So that in short, the continuation of the regular motions of the heavens, and of the vicissitudes of seasons, and alternate mutation of bodies, of the safety of the whole universe, notwithstanding the rude

in so much danger of being utterly extinguished, to awaken and revive it again from time to time by the wise and gracious methods of his providence; that so we might live happily here, as well as hereafter, by enjoying the blessings of each other's society, and the continual supports and comforts of religion: for it is to him that we owe our sense of religion, and it is to our sense of religion that we owe all the conveniencies and comforts of our lives. How much reason therefore have we to admire and adore the good providence of God, that hath taken so much care of us; that would not suffer us to make ourselves the most wretched and miserable of all beings; that hath been so vigilant to rouse and awake us when we were nodding into a lethargic stupidity, and sleeping away all the happiness and comfort of our lives; in a word, that hath kept religion alive in us, in despite of all our attempts to extinguish it, and would not suffer us to destroy the foundation of our own happiness!

3. Another instance of the goodness of God's providence to us, is his supporting of government in the world, notwithstanding the violent tendency of our corrupt natures to anarchy and confusion. If we reflect but a little upon the depraved natures of men, what ungovernable passions they carry about with them, how sick they are of every yoke, and how impatient of every restraint; how greedily they covet an unbounded liberty, and how much the greatest part of men are of this violent temper; it will afford us matter of sufficient astonishment, to think how government and good order could be so long preserved as it hath been, among such a sort of wild and extravagant creatures; especially considering how much more numerous the governed

party is than the governing; and how apt the government itself is to be rendered odious by ill management, by the tyranny and oppression of those that sit at the stern, and the perpetual factions and cross humours and interests of inferior ministers of state: I say, considering all these things, it is a wonder how the ship of government should live so long as it hath sailed in the midst of such tempests and hurricanes: and, doubtless, long ere now, it must have been swallowed up in anarchy and confusion, had it not been guarded by the providence of that God, who, as the Psalmist tells us, *stills the noise of the seas, and the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people*, Psalm lxv. 7. And how much of his providence hath been concerned in securing of government in the world, is evident from the care it hath taken to keep men under an awful sense of religion, which is the main foundation upon which government leans, and without which it must necessarily sink into ruin and confusion: for, together with religion, away go all principles of loyalty; and when these are all gone, their obedience to government will wholly depend upon their interest; and consequently, whensoever it is their interest to rebel, they have no obligation at all to restrain them. And as Providence hath been very careful to secure the main foundations of government, so it hath been no less careful to infatuate the counsels, and bring to light the dark contrivances, and baffle the open attempts of those that have sought to undermine it; and this in such a remarkable manner, that all the world hath taken peculiar notice, and all histories abound with innumerous instances of it. And in all the rises and falls of the empires of the world, there hath ever

been observed a most astonishing concurrence, either of such happy or unhappy accidents, as have very much furthered their approaching fates; which is a notorious evidence how much God is concerned in the securing of the governments of the world, in that he doth so immediately interpose in their rises and falls: and whensoever in his just displeasure he pulls down one, he always takes care to establish another in the room of it; lest through too long interregnums the nations of the earth should insensibly crumble into anarchy and confusion, and finally involve themselves in all the consequent mischiefs of it. For the subversion of government, like the opening of Pandora's box, must necessarily let loose a swarm of miseries into the world: for without government, wronged innocence can never be righted, invaded property can never be retrieved; but every man will be exposed to every man's lust; which must immediately involve us into a state of war; in which, like so many dogs, we should try all our right by our teeth. Into such a miserable state would mankind be reduced, if God did not uphold the governments of the world; so that whatsoever benefits we receive from the governments under which we live, we owe it all to the divine Providence, by whose procurement it is that *kings reign, and princes decree justice*, Prov. viii. 15. It is to this blessed cause that we are to attribute our sitting safely under our own vines, and peaceably enjoying the fruit of our labours; that we are not banished from society, and exposed to the spoils and ravages of those that are mightier than ourselves; that we are not become more savage than wolves to one another, and that the whole world is not converted into a common-

wealth of cannibals: for this would be the consequence of the dissolution of government, and that would be the consequence, in all probability, of God's withdrawing his providence from the world.

4. And lastly, Another instance of the goodness of God's providence to us, is its contributing to the invention and improvement of all those useful arts and sciences that are in the world: for if we seriously consider the prodigious numbers of these, wherewith the world doth abound, and wherein the generality of mankind are employed, we are never able to imagine, how they could have been invented and improved as they are, without the direction of an almighty Providence. For had not the divine Providence prolonged the lives of the first inventors of them to such a prodigious age as it did, they would not have had time to collect experiments enough whereon to found any certain theorems of natural science. How could they have measured the motions of those heavenly bodies, or given any tolerable account of their slow revolutions, if they had not lived so many hundreds of years as they did? And though the rudiments of proportion are lodged in our minds, yet it is not imaginable how men could ever have improved them into so many various practices of arithmetic, music, geometry, and mechanics, had they not been either inspired by God, or had a long space allowed to reduce them into practice. And he that shall but seriously consider, how far out of the road of ordinary experience many of the most useful arts of the world lie, such as writing and printing, by which a man may talk with his friend a thousand miles distance, and converse with the world when he is dead and gone, will

find sufficient reason to attribute the invention of them to the sovereign direction of the divine Providence; without which neither am I able to imagine how the medicinal virtues of sundry herbs and vegetables and minerals could have been discovered, which now are of great use to us, since even these also do lie exceedingly remote from common observation.

And when I also consider how many things are requisite to the completing of the most useful human arts, and what intricacy and mystery there is in them, insomuch that in many cases we are not able to give any reason why this or that cause in our art should produce this or that effect; I must needs conclude, that the invention and improvement of them hath been exceedingly promoted by the wise providence of God. And what reason have we to adore and admire its unspeakable goodness towards us, that by instructing us in so many excellent arts, hath not only found sufficient employment for the greatest part of mankind to subsist by, but hath also taught us mutually to assist one another with all kinds of commodities and conveniencies of life! So that now we want nothing that either nature or art can supply us withal; the good God having furnished us, not only with materials to work upon, but also with art and skill to manage and contrive them to the best advantage. One would have thought it had been sufficient for him to have created a world for us, and therein to have furnished us with all that is necessary for our being and subsistence, and so left it to ourselves to use and apply his blessings as we pleased; but that he should condescend to instruct us in so many arts of

improving his blessings, how to dress and cook them to the best advantage, and one way or other to render the meanest of them all useful and beneficial to ourselves and others, is such a gracious condescension of goodness, as for ever deserves our praise and admiration. And so I have done with the first thing proposed, which was, to shew you what apparent instances there are of the goodness of God in his providence towards us.

II. I proceed to the next thing proposed; which was, to shew you, that though there be some things in the world, that to us seem to be very ill and hurtful; yet it is infinitely unreasonable for us therefore to suspect the goodness and beneficence of God's providence, that because we see such an unequal distribution of good things to bad men, and do find so much sin and wickedness in the world, and so great a part of mankind overrun with so much barbarism, superstition, and idolatry; because, I say, we see and find such things as these in the world, we have no reason at all to charge the providence of God. For let us consider,

1. That the irregularities and evils which God permits in the world are not the effects of his providence, but of the choices and actions of free agents.

2. That many things seem evil to us in the world, because we take false measures of good and evil.

3. That many other things seem evil to us in the course of God's providence, merely because we often mistake bad men for good, and good men for bad.

4. That many things seem evil to us in the course of God's providence, because we are acquainted but with a small part of the world, and do judge of what

is good and evil for the whole, by what we find is good or evil for this small part.

5. That many other things seem evil to us in the course of God's providence, because we judge of them by their present sensible effects, and are not able to comprehend the universal drift, and connection, and dependence of them.

6. That many other things seem evil to us in the course of God's providence, merely because we understand very little of the other world.

1. That the irregularities and evils which God permits in the world are not the effects of his providence, but of the choices and actions of free agents. That there is such a thing as sin in the world is by no means to be charged upon the providence of God: for that neither commits any sin itself, nor impels or necessitates any others to commit it: *Let no man say when he is tempted, he is tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*, James i. 13. It is true, he permits men, whom he hath made free agents, to act freely; and if there be no fault at all in making of free agents, (as certainly there was not,) what fault can there be in permitting them to act congruous to their own natures? And is it just that God's providence should be blamed, because he doth not metamorphose free agents into necessary ones, that is, because he doth not unmake what he hath made, and subvert the laws of his creation? Or is it reasonable, that we, who are the only authors of sin, should blame the providence of God for suffering us to be so? For if sin be an evil, it is an evil to us, and consequently we are much more concerned to prevent it than the providence of God; and if, when

we may, we will not do it, it is unreasonable that we should blame God for not forcing us to prevent it, whether we will or no. So that all the quarrel we can have against God's providence is only this, that it doth not tie our hands and fetter our liberty in the chains of an adamantine necessity; that is, that he doth not undo his own workmanship, and thereby confess himself overseen in his creation of us, when there is no kind of reason for it. For, I beseech you, what hurt is it for men to be made free agents, and left to their own choice, whether they will be happy or miserable? And if it was no fault at all for God to make us so, what reason have we to blame him for continuing us what he made us? If therefore, while he continues us free agents, we will needs choose what is evil, and misemploy the talent of our natural liberty, the fault is ours, and not God's; and we may thank ourselves for all the bad consequents of it; and since not only sin, but most of the other evils that are in the world, proceed from our ill use of our own liberty, we ought in all reason to charge them upon ourselves, and not upon the good providence of God.

2. That many things seem evil to us in the course of God's providence, that are not so in themselves, by reason that we commonly take false measures of good and evil. We think it a very great evil, for instance, that good men are not blessed with great plenty and abundance, and that bad men are; because we imagine plenty and abundance to be a very great good, and the contrary a very formidable evil. And this makes us blame the providence of God; because we see the good things of this world so promiscuously distributed, without any discrimination of persons:

whereas in reality, plenty and abundance approaches nearer to the nature of an indifferent thing, than of a very great and desirable good. For if we consult our own experience, we shall find, that all worldly goods are just what we make them; and that they do as commonly prove plagues as blessings to the owners of them; that they entangle their affections, ensnare their innocence, disturb their peace, provoke and pamper their extravagant lusts, and betray them first into luxuries, then into gouts or dropsies, catarrhs or consumptions; and these most commonly prove the effects of outward abundance. So that in itself it is almost of an indifferent nature, and doth good or hurt to us, according as we use and improve it: and therefore, though God sometimes suffers good men to want, and bad men to enjoy it, we have no cause to quarrel at it; for he understands the just value of things, though we do not: he knows, that the best of worldly things are bad enough to be thrown away upon the worst of men; and so expresses his scorn of the admired vanities of this world, by scattering them with such a careless hand, and indulging the enjoyment of them to the most despicable persons. So that we ought to conclude that he sets no great value upon them, since he concerns himself no more in their distribution: for why should he partake in the errors of vulgar opinion, by expressing himself so regardful of these trifles, as to put them in golden scales, and weigh them out to mankind by grains and scruples?

3. That many other things seem evil to us in the course of God's providence that are not so, merely because we often mistake bad men for good, and good men for bad. For I dare say, that that obser-

vation upon which we ground our quarrel against the providence of God, viz. that it fares worst with the best, and best with the worst of men, is not half so general as we make it: for it is to be considered, that generally we pity the miserable, and envy the prosperous; and these passions of ours do commonly bribe our judgments, and make us think worse of the one, and better of the other, than either of them do deserve. For those whom we pity, we are inclined to love; and those whom we love, we are inclined to think well of; and if we think well of them, whether we have reason for it or no, we conclude, that God ought to be as fond of them as we. As on the contrary, those whom we envy, we always hate; and those whom we hate, we are inclined to think ill of; and if we think ill of them, we think that God is obliged to think so too. And because we are so unreasonably inclined by our passions to pass such false judgments upon men, is it fit that we should quarrel at God, because he doth not judge as unreasonably as ourselves? or because he doth not reward and punish men according to the sentence that our blind pity or envy passes upon them? If we could but strip ourselves of all passion, and were but able to judge of men, not by what they appear, but by what they really are; I doubt not, but we shall find, that even in this life it fares best with the best, and worst with the worst of men: but since we are not competent judges of this matter, we should have a care of reproaching the providence of God, with a maxim that hath no other foundation in the nature of things, but our own fallacious observation.

4. That many things seem evil to us in the course of God's providence that are not so, because we are

acquainted but with a small part of the world, and do judge of what is good or evil for the whole, by what we find is good and evil for this small part. We are never able to comprehend how far the dominions of the divine Providence extend, nor how many orders of beings, as well above as below us, are concerned in its empire and government: but unless we could do this, we cannot be capable judges of what is good or bad in the general course of its actions. For that is good or bad in the providence of God, that is good or bad for its whole empire and dominion; and though this or that may be an inconvenience to this or that part of it, yet these particular inconveniencies may be a great convenience to the whole. As for instance, suppose a man should come into the country of Siberia, which is a great part of the empire of Russia, whither that emperor is wont to banish all great malefactors; he would there find the inhabitants in a most miserable condition, they being there exposed to hunger and cold, and perpetual slavery. So that if a man should judge of the whole empire by this part of it, he would conclude that emperor to be a most savage tyrant, and his country to be the most miserable place in the world; whereas in reality, all other parts of that empire are rendered more happy by the miseries of this place, which serve to strike an awe into all the other subjects of it, and to restrain them within the bounds of their loyalty and duty. And so, unless we had as full a prospect of the whole dominion of God's providence, as we have of this little spot of it, we ought not to censure his government of the whole, by the little inconveniencies that occur in his government of a part: for in such a vast do-

minion as God's is, there may be a thousand good reasons, that we know not of, why some parts of it should be more unhappy than others; and if in some particulars he incommodes this part for the public commodity of the whole, we are so far from having any reason to complain, that we ought in all justice to praise and adore his goodness for it. It is enough for us that we understand so much of God's nature as we do, and have such apparent instances of his goodness in the works of his creation and providence: and therefore, if we in this little part of God's empire suffer some small inconveniencies, we ought to bless and adore his goodness for those greater goods we enjoy; and to rest satisfied with this, that our particular inconveniencies may, for all we know, be great conveniencies to the public.

5. That many other things seem evil to us in the course of God's providence, because we judge of them by their present sensible effects, and are not able to comprehend the universal drift, and connection, and dependence of them. For, as I have already shewn you in the former discourse on this argument, there is a continued juncture and dependence, from first to last, between all the actions and contrivances of divine Providence; and every one hath a relation to every one, from the beginning to the end of all the mighty chain of causes whereof it consists. So that it is impossible to judge rightly of one part of Providence separately from the rest; because we see not the relation it hath either to what went before, or to what is to follow after: and though singly considered, it may be hurtful; yet in conjunction with all the rest, it may be exceedingly advantageous. He that looks only on the first links of

that curious chain of providence in the history of Joseph, will be apt to entertain a very bad opinion of the whole: first, he is thrown into a desolate pit, then sold a slave, then falsely accused, then cast into prison: Lord, what a tragical prologue is here! But then take all those things in conjunction with what follows, and you shall presently see that scene clear up, and all those sad preparations ending in a joyful conclusion. And if we consider that most glorious part that ever God's providence acted on the stage of the world, viz. the history of our blessed Saviour; how dark and gloomy doth the former part of it look, if we view it separately from the antecedents and consequents of it! Surely, if any thing would justify our hard censures of God's providence, it would be the beholding such a rare and excellent person exposed to so many miseries and calamities; to see him cast forth to the wide world, as a helpless prey to the rage of his enemies; to behold him hanging upon the cross, deserted of his friends, mocked and tormented by his barbarous murderers, and in the most bitter agonies breathing out his white and innocent soul: O good Lord! what a dismal prospect of thy providence is here! But stay a little, let us but see the glorious light that in conclusion brake out of this dismal darkness; first, he is raised from the dead; then he ascends up to heaven, where, at the right hand of his Father, he reigns an eternal King in full power and authority to give gifts unto men, and bestow those immortal rewards on them which he purchased for them with his blood. So that though, singly and apart, the first scenes of this great providence were very dismal and affrighting; yet, considered all together, how beautiful and harmonious doth

it appear! So true is that of the preacher, Eccles. iii. 11. *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.* And therefore, because we are not able to see from the beginning to the end of God's providence, it is an unreasonable thing for us to censure the whole, because of some seeming inconveniencies that we see in those parts of it that lie before us. Let us stay but till the winding up of the bottom, till all is finished, and present it one entire piece to view, and then we shall have leave to censure, if we can find any reason for it.

6. And lastly, Many other things seem evil to us in the course of God's providence, which are not so, merely because we understand very little of the other world. It seems to us a mighty evil in Providence, that so great a part of the world is in darkness and ignorance, and in so great a measure deprived of the vast advantages of true religion: but how do we know how God will dispose of them in the other world, what abatements he will make them, and by what measures he will judge them; whether he will not allow them some further time of trial, and so make good to them there, whatsoever hath been wanting here? But whatsoever he doth, or will do, this we may be sure of, that he will damn none but those that are first self-condemned, but those that knowingly and willingly miscarry; and if so, then he will exact of them but in proportion to their abilities, and will not require brick where he hath given no straw. But, which way soever he deals with them, to be sure, first or last, he will not be wanting in any

degrees of kindness to them, that are fit either for a wise sovereign to grant, or a reasonable subject to demand: and if he will do so, (as undoubtedly he will,) how unreasonably do we complain of his providence towards us! And though in this life we see many good men reduced to a very calamitous condition, yet how do we know how necessary this may be to the securing of their happiness in the world to come! For since our main state and interest is in that other world, there is no doubt but the providence of God over us doth chiefly respect that; and if so, how unreasonably do we censure it upon the score of the present evils it exposes us to, when we know so little of the future state, to which all its transactions do chiefly relate! Wherefore, let us forbear a while, till we come into the other world, and understand the whole design and contrivance, and then we shall see that all will be right and well, yea, and infinitely better than we could imagine. But for us to censure now, when we know so little of our future state, which is the main and ultimate scope of Providence, is just as if a man should pass his judgment on a picture, when he sees nothing of it, but some few rude lines and very imperfect strokes. Let us have but the patience to suspend our judgment a while, till God hath finished the whole draught, and given it all its natural colours and proportions; and then, I am sure, we shall see cause enough for ever to admire his skill and adore his goodness. And thus you see by apparent instances how good God is in his providence towards us, and how unreasonable it is for us to censure his goodness, notwithstanding all those seeming evils that happen in the world.

And now, what remains, but that with all humility and cheerfulness we resign up ourselves into the hands of our most merciful Father, concluding, as most certainly we may, that whatsoever he doth with us, or howsoever he disposes of us, it will be all for our good in the latter end, if it be not through our own default. For where can we be safer, than in the hands of an omnipotent and omniscient goodness? a goodness that knows what is best for us, and wills what it knows to be so, and doth whatsoever it wills. Surely in such hands our condition is a thousand times better and safer, than if we had full power to effect our own wishes, and all the events that concern us were in our own disposal. And if God should shake us off from all dependence on him, and resign up the whole conduct of our affairs into our own hands; if he should say to us, "Since "you mislike of my conduct, I will no more inter-"meddle with you, or any thing that concerns you: "take yourselves into your own disposal, and ma-"nage all your concernments as you please:" if, I say, he should do thus with us, we should be left in a most forlorn and deplorable condition; and unless we were wholly abandoned of our own reason, as well as God's providence, we should on our bended knees resign up all into his hands again, and beseech him, for his pity and his mercy's sake, to do any thing with us that will consist with his goodness; to scourge and chasten us for our frowardness, as much and as long as his own fatherly bowels will endure it, rather than give us up to our own conduct, or leave our affairs in the disposal of our own blind and precipitant wills. For so long as God is so powerfully and so wisely good as he is, it is the interest

of every creature in heaven and earth to be at his disposal, and to take up that self-resigning prayer of our Saviour, *Father, not our wills, but thy will be done.* For since God wills our good, as much or more than ourselves, it must doubtless be our interest that his will should take place whensoever it stands in competition with ours, because he doth not only wish well to us, as much as we do to ourselves, but he knows what is best for us a great deal better than we. Wherefore, let us learn in all conditions to repose our minds in the good providence of God, and to satisfy ourselves in its management and disposal of us: for whatsoever condition it may bring us into, whilst we are wandering through this vale of tears, this is most certainly true, that *God is good, and doeth good.*

DISCOURSE XVII.

UPON

JOHN III. 16.

God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

THE three first topics from whence I undertook to prove the goodness of God, I have already handled on another text, and shewed,

1. From his nature,
2. From his creation, and
3. From his providence, that he is infinitely good.

I proceed now to the fourth and last, viz. from principles of revelation; the main of which is comprehended in the text, *God so loved the world*, &c.

It is indeed a most glorious instance of the goodness of God, that when he had imprinted his laws upon our nature in such legible characters, and given them such apparent sanctions in the nature of things; having made such a sensible distinction between moral good and evil, by those natural good and evil consequents which he hath inseparably entailed on them; and when mankind, by their wilful wickedness and inadvertency, had almost obliterated the law of their nature, and extinguished their natural sense of good and evil, and immersed themselves in the most barbarous impieties and immoralities: notwithstanding all this that he had done for us, and we against ourselves, he should still be so kind

and compassionate as to put forth a new edition of his laws, and reveal his will anew to us in such an extraordinary manner; that when he had implanted a light in our natures, that was sufficient to have directed us into the several paths of our duty, and we, by our own neglect and abuse of it, had almost extinguished this candle of the Lord in us, and consequently involved ourselves in midnight darkness and ignorance, he should then be so compassionate as to hang out a light from heaven to us, to rectify our wanderings, and guide our feet in the paths we should walk in, was such a glorious expression of his goodness, as for ever deserves our most thankful acknowledgments. But then, that he should not only reveal to us what he had before imprinted on our nature, and we had most unworthily rased out and obliterated, but also discover so much more to us, than ever we did, or could have known by the light of our nature; that he should not only repeat his former kindness to us, which we had so shamefully abused, but make such stupendous additions to it, as he hath done in the revelation of his gospel; that, maugre all those impieties and provocations, by which for so many ages we had excited his patience, he should not only so love us, as to restore to us the light which we had almost extinguished, but to give his *only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish*, &c. is such an amazing instance of goodness, as can hardly be reflected on without an ecstacy of admiration.

In which words you have God's revealed love and goodness to the world measured by a twofold standard.

I. By the greatness of the gift which he hath bestowed upon the world, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.*

II. The blessed end for which he did bestow him, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

I. I begin with the first of these, viz. the greatness of the gift, by which the greatness of his love to us is measured; *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son:* Ἔδωκεν, *he gave him,* that is, he delivered him up from out of his own bosom and everlasting embraces: for so, Eph. v. 2. it is παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν, *he gave himself for us,* or delivered up himself for us: for so we render the words ὃς παρεδόθη διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν, *who was delivered for our offences,* Rom. iv. 25. Now what a stupendous expression of God's love this was, will appear by considering these six things, which are all of them expressed or implied in the text:

1. That he gave him up, who was not only the greatest, but the dearest person to him in the whole world.

2. That he gave him up for sinners.

3. That he gave him up for a whole world of sinners.

4. That he gave him up to become a man for sinners.

5. That he gave him up to be a miserable man for sinners.

6. That he gave him to be a sacrifice for the sins of sinners, that so he might not only with more effect, but with more security to us, intercede for our pardon.

1. The greatness of God's love and goodness to-

wards us appears in this, that he gave up for our sakes, not only the greatest, but the dearest person to him in the whole world: for, as the text tells you, it was *his only begotten Son.* Which phrase, doubtless, imports a much higher signification than his being begotten in the Virgin's womb by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. For though it cannot be denied, but in scripture he is called *the Son of God,* sometimes upon the account of this his divine generation in the Virgin's womb, and sometimes upon the score of his being ordained by God to the messiahship; sometimes because he was raised by God from the dead, and sometimes because he was installed by him into his mediatorial kingdom: yet upon neither of these accounts can he be properly called *the only begotten Son:* for upon the three last accounts sundry others have been as properly begotten by God as our Saviour; some having been installed by him into great and eminent offices, others raised from the dead, others truly ordained by him his messiahs, or anointed ones: so that upon neither of these accounts can he be styled *the only begotten Son,* others having been thus begotten as well as himself. And as for the first, his being conceived by the Holy Ghost in the Virgin's womb, this was not sufficient neither to entitle him *the only begotten,* because, though it was indeed a miraculous production, yet was it not so much above the production of the first man, as to place him in that singular eminence. For the forming of Adam out of the substance of the earth was altogether as miraculous a production as the forming of Christ out of the substance of the woman: and therefore since Adam is called *the son of God,* Luke

iii. 38. because God immediately formed him of the substance of the earth, he had thereby as good a right to the title of *God's only begotten Son* as Christ himself had, because God immediately formed him of the substance of a woman. Wherefore his peculiar right above all others, to this glorious title of God's *only begotten Son*, must necessarily be founded upon some higher reason than this; that is, upon some such reason as is wholly peculiar to himself. For if he be really and truly God's only begotten Son, all other persons whatsoever must necessarily be excluded from that claim; and consequently, he must be so begotten of God, as no other person is, or ever was: and to be so begotten of God is to be begotten by him, by a proper and natural generation; which is nothing else but a vital production of another in the same nature with him from whom it is produced; even as a man begets a man, and every animal begets another of the same kind and nature with itself: and thus to be begotten of God is to be begotten into the same divine nature with himself; to derive or communicate from him the infinitely perfect nature and essence of a God. And in this sense only our blessed Saviour is the *only begotten Son of the Father*, as being generated by him from all eternity into the same nature, and communicating from him his own infinite essence and perfections; in which sense he is truly the only begotten Son; because in this sense, and in this only, none is, or was, or ever shall be begotten of the Father, but himself.

When therefore it is said, that *he gave his only begotten Son*, the meaning is this; he gave up that infinitely great and dear Son of his, that is, his na-

tural image and resemblance; that *only Son*, to whom from all eternity he hath communicated his own most perfect essence and nature. If then it was so great an instance of Abraham's faith, and ardent love of God, at his command to offer up his only son Isaac, a son who, though how hopeful soever, yet who fell infinitely shorter of the perfection of our Saviour than the light of the glowworm doth of the light of the sun; what an astonishing miracle of love was it in the great Father of the world, to give up his *only begotten Son;* a Son whom he had begotten in his own divine nature, and to whom he had communicated all the infinite perfections of his own being; a Son, who was the most perfect image of himself, who was infinitely powerful, and wise, and good; and differed from him in nothing but only in being his Son; who had the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him, and whom, being infinitely perfect as himself, he loved as infinitely as his own person, and consequently could as easily have given up himself for us, as he did that dearly beloved, in whom his soul was so well pleased! who, but a God of infinite love and immeasurable inclination to do good to his creatures, would have given them such an inestimable jewel out of his bosom; a jewel wherein all the brightness of the Divinity did sparkle, and which, upon that account, was as dear and precious to him as his own life? And hence we find the apostle valuing the greatness of God's love to us by the greatness and dearness of the Person whom he gave up for our sakes: *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him,* 1 John iv. 9. And indeed, without

this consideration of his being the *only begotten Son of God* by eternal generation and communion of nature with him, God's love in giving him up for us would not be comparably so considerable as it is. For if, according to the doctrine of the Socinians, he should only have caused a man to be born for us after another manner than other men are, and then have delivered him for our sake, there would have been no such great expression of his love in this way of redeeming us, more than what must have appeared, should he have chosen to redeem us any other way. To have redeemed us indeed, by what means soever, would have been a most glorious expression of his love and good-will to us; but since the scripture hath raised the consideration of God's love higher, from the dignity of the Person whom he sent to redeem us, by how much higher the dignity of this Person is, by so much greater is the estimation of his love. But if the dignity of Christ's Person, as *the only begotten Son of God*, consisted merely in being a man, born into the world in such an extraordinary manner, this would have made such an inconsiderable addition to his love in redeeming us, that he would have much more aggrandized his kindness to us, to have offered up an angel of heaven for us, though of the most inferior order, than to have thus delivered up his only begotten Son. But to offer up his natural Son, to whom he had communicated his nature, his Son, who was God coeternal and coessential with himself, was a more transcendent expression of his love to us, than if he had unpeopled heaven for our sakes, and delivered up to us the whole choir of angels, and archangels, and seraphims.

2. The greatness of God's love and goodness towards us appears in this also, that he gave up his *only begotten Son* for us when we were sinners: and this is implied in that expression, *God so loved the world;* that is, the world as it then was, a base, depraved, and degenerate world: for of this very world, whom God thus loved, the apostle gives this extreme bad character, *The whole world lieth in wickedness*, 1 John v. 19. And St. Paul, distributing the whole world into Jews and Gentiles, pronounces universally concerning them, *that they were all under sin*, Rom. iii. 9. so that in giving up his Son for such a world as this, he must necessarily give him for sinners. And certainly, should we measure God's goodness by our own, this consideration is enough to render his giving his only begotten Son for us a most incredible expression of it; that when by our sins we had provoked him beyond the sufferance of any patience but his own; when in despite of all those innumerable mercies wherewith from time to time he had sought to oblige us, and maugre all those stupendous judgments with which, from one generation to another, he hath endeavoured to curb and restrain us; when he had used so many effectual arts to reclaim and amend us, and we, by our own obstinacy, had baffled and defeated them all; and instead of mending, grew worse and worse under all his powerful applications; one would have thought, that now at last, instead of trying any further experiments on us, he might have been sufficiently provoked to give us up as physicians do their patients when they are past all hope of recovery, and so let us alone to perish in our own obstinacy. And doubtless, if, after all these provocations, we had

known that he had intended to send his Son into the world, our own guilt and consciousness would have made us conclude, that the design of his sending him was only to ruin and destroy us, to extirpate the whole race of us from the face of the earth, that so his creation might be no longer scandalized with the remembrance of such a generation of monsters. But now that, after so many repeated affronts and rebellions, and in the midst of so many loud-crying guilts that perpetually rang in his ears, he should still persevere to love us in such a transcendent degree, as to part with what is nearest and dearest to him for our sakes, even his only begotten Son out of his bosom, is such an astonishing expression of his goodness to us, as we can never sufficiently magnify and admire. Had mankind been as innocent as they are guilty before God; had their virtues been as great and as numerous as their crimes were; yet to send this great Son down from heaven to visit them, had been such an instance of condescending goodness in him, as would have justly merited our everlasting praise and remembrance: but to send him down to sinners, to such a race of obstinate and incorrigible sinners, and that, not to destroy, but to save them; to obtain for, and tender to them a kingdom of immortal pleasures, and use all possible means safely to conduct them thither; Lord, what a miracle of love is this! And hence the apostle estimates this prodigious instance of the love of God by the undeservingness of those upon whom it was exercised: *But God*, says he, *commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*, Rom. v. 8.

3. The greatness of God's love and goodness to-

wards us appears in this also, that he gave up his only begotten Son for the whole world of sinners: he did not confine and limit this great design of his goodness, by granting a monopoly of it to a few particular favourites; but settled it as a public charter on the whole corporation of mankind: for he *so loved the world*, says the text, *that he gave his only begotten Son;* that is, for the benefit of the world. For how could his giving of his Son have been an expression of his love to the world, if he had not given him for the public benefit of the world? Had his design been to restrain his gift to a few particular persons, whom he had designed to rescue from the general shipwreck, the text must have run thus; *God so loved some particular persons in the world, that he gave up his only begotten Son.* For to make that an instance of his love to all, which he designed only for the benefit of a few, is to pretend a love to the greatest part of men which he never intended them: for that by *the world* here he means the whole world, he himself assures us, 1 John ii. 2. *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* And what he means by *the whole world*, he tells in the same Epistle, chap. v. *The whole world lieth in wickedness.* So that this whole world that lies in wickedness is that whole world for whose sins Christ is a propitiation; and that whole world, for whose sake Christ is a propitiation, is the world whom God so loved as to give his only begotten Son for. But the apostle yet more expressly tells us, that *the head of every man is Christ*, 1 Cor. xi. 3. And if so, then every man is a part of Christ's body; and if so, then every man hath a communion in the benefits of his blood; for,

Ephes. v. 23. he is said to be *the Saviour of the body;* and more expressly yet, Heb. ii. 9. it is said, that *by the grace of God he tasted death for every man.* So that the scripture hath as emphatically declared the universal extent of this great gift of God's love, as it was possible for it to do in any human words: and methinks it is strange, that any men should presume to restrain it, when they have no other defence for so doing, but only an odd distinction that makes *the whole world* to signify the smallest part of it; *the body of Christ* to import a few particular atoms of it; and *every man* to denote one man of ten thousand.

Behold then the immense goodness of God, that hath not only given up his Son for sinners, but for a whole world of sinners; and excluded none but those who exclude themselves from the benefits of this mighty donation! that hath planted this heavenly tree of life in the midst of a sick and sinful world; and hath not confined or enclosed it for the use of a few selected patients; but laid it open for all comers, that whosoever would, might take of its fruit, and eat, and live for ever. O good God! how vast is thy love, that hath thus impartially diffused itself over such a wide world of sinners, that in this stupendous gift of thy Son hath so kind a respect to every individual, and made no exception of any, how sinful and unworthy soever, that will but comply with the merciful terms and conditions of it.

4. The greatness of God's love and goodness towards us appears also in this, that he hath given up his only begotten Son to become a man for sinners. For whatsoever he was upon God's giving him up, he was what God gave him up to be; and therefore,

since upon God's giving him up, he became a man, it necessarily follows, that he gave him up to become so. And indeed, since God had such a merciful design, as to send his Son into the world to reform and save it; it was highly convenient for us, though not for him, that he should come to us in our own natures, not only that he might consecrate human nature, that had been so miserably desecrated and profaned; but also, that he might endear himself to us by the great honour he did us in assuming our natures; and that having our passions, and being in our circumstances, he might by his own practice give us an example how to govern the one, and how to behave ourselves in the other. Had he come down from the heavens, enrobed with splendour and light, and preached his gospel to us in the midst of a choir of angels, from some bright throne in the clouds; this indeed would have been more convenient for him, as being more suitable to the natural dignity and majesty of his Person. But the all-merciful Father, in the disposal of his Son, consulted not so much his convenience as ours: he knew well enough, that should he have sent his Son to us in such an illustrious equipage, his appearance among us would have been more apt to astonish, than to instruct us; and to have fixed our thoughts in a profound admiration of his glory, than to have directed our steps in the paths of virtue and true happiness; and that it would be much more for our interest, that he should conduct us by his example, than amaze us by his appearance: and therefore, that he might do so, he sent him to us in our own natures; that so going before us as a man, he might shew us by his example what became men to do, and direct us by the print of his

own footsteps. Since therefore he assumed our nature purely for our sakes, what a stupendous instance of God's goodness was this; that for the sake of a world of miserable sinners, he should be content that his own most dear and most glorious Son should condescend to become a man, and to empty himself into our nature; that he who, by the divinity of his nature, was exalted more above that of the highest angel than that is above the lowest animal, would personally unite himself to a handful of dust, and marry his divinity to the infirmities of our nature; that he, whose throne was in the heavens, and before whose sacred feet the whole choir of heavenly angels lie prostrate, should abase himself so low, as to come down among mortals, and associate himself with companions so unworthy of him! O good God! when thou hast condescended so low, what is there thou wilt not condescend to, to do good to thy creatures! But this is not all, you shall see him stoop lower yet; for,

5. The greatness of God's love and goodness towards us appears also in this, that he gave up *his only begotten Son* to become a miserable man for sinners. It would have been some abatement to his mighty condescension, if, when he sent him down among us in our nature, he had made him supreme visible monarch of the world; if he had crowned him with all the splendours of an earthly condition; if he had ushered him into the world in a triumphal chariot, with all the kings of the earth, either prostrate before him, or chained at his chariot wheels: this, though a vast condescension in the eternal Son, yet would not have been so low, as it was to be born of a poor mother, to be educated as a carpenter's

son, to be exposed to want and penury, to the contempt of every sordid wretch, and the perpetual persecutions of a borish and ill-natured rabble: and yet this was the wretched state to which God humbled his own dear Son for our sakes. For the design of his humiliation being to raise us, the most merciful Father consulted not so much what was for his ease, as what was for our benefit: for he knew well enough, that should he have introduced him into the world in earthly pomp and magnificence, it would not have been so well for us; that we were too ambitious already of the vanities of this world, and that had been the great snare that had entangled and ruined us; and that therefore it was necessary, when his Son came amongst us, he should take us off from our over-eager pursuit of them, disgrace and expose them to us by his own voluntary refusal of them; that by seeing him trample on them, when they lay all at his feet, we might learn to despise them, and be at length convinced what foolish bargains we make, when we sell our innocence and our happiness for such insignificant trifles. He thought it much more necessary for us, that his Son should exercise his virtue, than display his greatness among us; and therefore he placed him in such circumstances of human life, wherein by his own example he might copy out to us the noblest pattern of holy living. For of all states, that of affliction affords the largest sphere to exercise human virtue in: and therefore in this state, out of his good will to us, he placed his own Son, that herein he might set us a pattern of obedience to superiors, and contempt of the world; of patience, and courage, and meekness, and resignation to the will of God; that so by his example we might be

excited to the exercise of all those passive virtues, which are not only most glorious, but most difficult to human nature; and that by beholding how mean, and yet how good he was, we might all become more ambitious of being good, than great in the world.

Now, what an amazing instance of God's goodness is this, that merely for our sakes, to promote our happiness, he should depress his own Son into such a miserable condition, *that he who was in the form of God, who thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, should, by the appointment of his own Father, to whom he was so infinitely dear, *make himself of no reputation, take on him the form of a servant, become a man of sorrows, and acquaint himself with griefs;* and all this to put himself into a better capacity of doing good to the world! Good God! when I consider with myself, that once there was a time when thou didst send thy blessed Son from heaven to assume my nature; that therein he dwelt upon this earth, and conversed with such poor mortals as myself; that he suffered himself to be despised and persecuted, and by thy own appointment wandered about like a poor wretch, naked and destitute of all those comforts which I abundantly enjoy; and all this, that he might the more effectually do good to a world of ill-natured sinners; methinks, this wondrous prodigy of love not only puzzles my conceit, but outreaches my wonder and admiration: and though it be a love that exceeds my largest thoughts, such as I have infinite cause to rejoice in, but could never have had the impudence to expect; yet, while I stand gazing on it, methinks I am like one that is looking down from a stupendous precipice, whose

height fills me with a trembling horror, and even oversets my reason.

6. And lastly, The greatness of God's love and goodness towards us appears also in this, that he gave his *only begotten Son* to be a sacrifice for the sins of miserable sinners: and this is plainly implied in that expression, *He gave his only begotten Son:* for in the two verses foregoing the text, our Saviour foretells his own death: *For as Moses*, saith he, *lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* And then it immediately follows, *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son;* that is, he gave him to be lifted up upon the cross, even as the serpent was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness; that so by his precious death and sacrifice, he might make an atonement for the sins of the world. And accordingly he is said to be *delivered up for our offences*, Rom. iv. 25. even as the sacrifice was delivered up at the door of the tabernacle, to propitiate God for the sins of the offerer. For to complete the propitiatory sacrifices under the law, three things were requisite; first, the offering of it at the door of the tabernacle; the slaying of it; and the presenting of its blood, either within the holy of holies or elsewhere; all which were found in the sacrifice of our blessed Saviour. First, he offered himself to God as a willing victim for the sins of the world. Hence John xvii. 19. *For this cause*, saith he, *do I sanctify myself*, that is, offer up myself as a sacrifice to thee: for so, in Levit. xxii. 2, 3, and sundry other places, to hallow or sanctify any thing to the Lord

denotes the offering it to him in sacrifice. And accordingly we find that that prayer by which Christ consecrated himself to the Lord, John xvii. was much like that by which the high priest did consecrate his victims before the altar, on the great day of expiation: for as he, before he slew the sacrifice, did first commend himself and his own family, then the family of Aaron, and the whole congregation, to the Lord; so our Saviour, in this excellent prayer, whereby he sanctified himself to his Father a sacrifice for the sins of the world, first commended himself to him, then his apostles, then all those who should afterwards believe in his name; which having done, he went forth presently to the place where he was apprehended, and carried to judgment, and condemned to death. Then, as a propitiatory sacrifice, he was slain for our sins; for so St. Peter tells us, 1 Epist. ii. 24. *he bore our sins in his own body on the tree;* that is, that natural evil of a most shameful and painful death was inflicted on him for our sins, that so he might make an expiation for them, and free us from the guilt and punishment that was due to them. Hence in that prophecy of him, Isaiah liii. we often meet with such expressions as these; *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed: the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all: for the transgression of my people was he stricken: thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, and he shall bear their iniquities: he was numbered with the transgressors,*

and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

All which expressions do plainly imply, that what he suffered he suffered for our sins, as a sacrifice substituted in the room of us who were the offenders, that so he might make expiation for us, and obtain our pardon from his Father. And accordingly, in the New Testament, he is said *to be made a curse for us*, to be our *ransom* and *propitiation*, to *redeem* and *reconcile* us, and *obtain* the remission of our sins by his blood; to *die* for us and for our sins, and to be our *propitiation*. All which expressions being applied to the sacrifices of atonement under the law, and from them derived upon our Saviour, do plainly denote him to be a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the world. And then, lastly, there is the presenting of his blood for us in heaven, and in the virtue thereof his interceding for us with his Father. And hence, the blood of Christ, as it is now presented in heaven, is called *the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel*, Heb. xii. 24. In which he plainly alludes to the high priest's sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifice in the holy of holies, which was a type of Christ's presenting his blood for us in heaven, as you may see, Heb. ix. 7. compared with the 11th and 12th verses. Verse 7. he tells us, that *the high priest entered not into the holy of holies without blood:* but then, verse 12. it is said, that *Christ with his own blood entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.* And in virtue of his blood, which he poured out as a sacrifice for our sins upon the cross, he now pleads our cause at the

right hand of his Father, and ever lives to make intercession for us.

So that you see the death of Christ had in it all the necessary ingredients of a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world; and having so, what a prodigious instance is it of the love of God to us, that rather than destroy us, he would give up his own Son to be a sacrifice for us! I do not deny, but if he had pleased, he might have pardoned and saved us without any sacrifice at all; but he knew very well, that if he should do so, it would be much worse for us. He knew, that if he should pardon our sins without giving us some great instance of his implacable hatred of them, we should be too prone to presume upon his lenity, and thereupon to return again to our old vomit and uncleanness: and therefore, though it would have been more for the ease and interest of his blessed Son to have pardoned us without any sacrifice at all; yet such was his love to us, that because he foresaw that this way of pardoning would prove fatal and dangerous to us, he was resolved that he would not do it, without being moved thereunto by the greatest sacrifice that the world could afford him, and that no less a propitiation should appease his wrath against offenders, than the blood of his own Son; that so, by beholding his severity against our sins in this unvaluable sacrifice of the blood of his Son, we might be sufficiently terrified from returning again to them, by the very same reason that moved him to pardon them; that we might not think light of that which God would not forgive without such a vast consideration; but might tremble to think of repeating those sins, the price of whose pardon was the dearest blood of the

Son of God. Hence is that of the apostle, Rom. iii. 25, 26. *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness*, that is, his righteous severity against sin, *for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just*, that is, sufficiently severe against the sins of men, so as to warn them from returning, *and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus*. So that now he hath reduced things to an excellent temper, having so provided, that neither himself nor we might be damnified; that we might not suffer by our doing again what we have done, and that he might not suffer by our doing still the same; that he might be what he is, a pure and a holy Saviour; and that we might be what we ought, dutiful and obedient subjects. Now what an amazing instance of God's love is this, that he should so far consult the good of his creatures, as to sacrifice his own Son to their benefit and safety! How inexpressibly must he needs love us, that for our sakes could behold his most dearly beloved Son hanging on a cross, covered with wounds and blood, forsaken by his friends, despised and spit on by his barbarous enemies; that could hear him complain in the bitterness of his soul, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* and yet suffer him to continue under that unsufferable agony, till he had given up his white and innocent soul an unspotted sacrifice for the sins of the world: yea, notwithstanding the infinite love that he bore him, and the piteous moans that his torments forced from him, was so far from relieving him, that for our sakes he inflicted upon him the utmost misery

that human nature could bear; that so, having an experimental sense of the most grievous suffering that mankind is liable to, and being touched with the utmost feeling of our infirmities, and in all points tempted like unto us, he might carry a more tender commiseration for us to heaven, and know the better how to pity us in our griefs and extremities. For *in all things it behoved him*, saith the apostle, *to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest*, Heb. ii. 17.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, and let all the creation attend with astonishment to this stupendous story of love, which so far exceeds all the heroic kindnesses that ever any romance of friendship thought of, that no less evidence than that of miracles could have ever rendered it credible. Well then might the apostle say, *Herein is love, not that we loved God;* for after such vast obligations, this is no great wonder; *but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*, 1 John iv. 10. And thus you see what an unspeakable instance of the love of God his giving his only begotten Son is. I shall now conclude this argument with a few practical inferences from the whole.

1. From hence I infer, what monstrous ingratitude it would be in us to deny any thing to God that he demands at our hands, who hath been so liberal to us as to give up his only begotten Son for our sakes. O blessed God! if it were possible for us to do or suffer for thee a thousand times more than at present we are able, what a poor return were this for the gift of thy Son, that unspeakable expression of thy goodness! And can we deny thee

any thing after such an instance of love, especially when thy demands are so gentle and reasonable? when he requires nothing of us but what is for our good; and the requital he demands for all his love to us is only that we should love ourselves, and express this love in doing those duties which he therefore enjoins, because they tend to our happiness; and avoiding those sins which he therefore forbids, because he knows they will be our bane and poison? Can any of my lusts be as dear to me as the only begotten Son was to the Father of all things? And yet he parted with him out of love to me; and shall not I part with these for the love of him? How can we pretend to any thing that is modest or ingenuous, tender or apprehensive in human nature, when nothing will oblige us, no, not this astonishing love of God, in sending his Son from heaven to live and die miserably for our sakes! Lord, what do thy holy angels think of us! How do thy blessed saints resent our unkindness towards thee! Yea, how justly do the devils themselves reproach and upbraid our baseness; who, bad as they are, were never so much devils yet, as to make an ungrateful return of such a vast obligation!

2. From hence I infer, how desperate our condition will be, if we defeat the end of this gift of the Son of God, and render it ineffectual to us. For God hath no more sons to bestow upon us, he being the only begotten of his Father; heaven and earth are not able to furnish him with such another gift to bestow upon us: and if he should lay a tax upon all his creation, to raise one great contribution to the happiness of mankind, and exact the utmost of every creature that it is able to contribute, it would

all fall infinitely short of what he hath done for us in this inestimable gift of his own Son. So that if this prove ineffectual, it is beyond the power of an omnipotent bounty to relieve us. For though God can do all things that can be well and wisely done, and do not imply a contradiction, yet this can be no relief at all to us who reject his Son, and refuse to be made happy in the gracious method which he hath prescribed to us. For after this mighty gift of his own Son to save us according to the method of his gospel, there remains nothing more to be done for us, but either to save us whether we will or no, or else to make us happy in our sins, and save us notwithstanding our continuance in them. The former of which can neither be well nor wisely done; because, by saving us against our wills, he must deal with us in such a way as is repugnant to that law of liberty that is implanted in our natures, and use us, not as free, but as necessary agents. And if, considering all things, it was best and wisest that he should make us free agents, then it can neither be well nor wise to govern us as necessary ones; since by so doing he must alter the course of our nature, and consequently swerve and decline from what is best and wisest, which would be to do violence to the perfection of his own nature.

And then, as for the latter, he cannot do it, because it implies a contradiction. For to make men happy in their sins, is to make them happy in their miseries; misery being as inseparable from sin, as heat is from fire, and as intimately related to it, as the son is to the father; and consequently, he may as possibly make a father without a son, as a sinner without misery. When therefore God hath done all

for us that can possibly be done, and we by our own obstinacy have rendered all ineffectual, we are beyond the power of remedy, and must necessarily perish in our sins. And when we have no other hope to depend on but this, that the all-wise God will undo his own workmanship, and unravel our nature, by governing us contrary to the most wise constitution of it; or that the all-powerful God will effect impossibilities, and do that for us which is not an object of power, how deplorable and desperate must our condition be! Wherefore, as you would not run yourselves beyond the reach of all mercy, and excommunicate your own souls from all hope of salvation, be now at last persuaded to comply with Christ's coming; which was to reduce you from the error of your ways, and to bring you to a serious repentance.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

UPON

JOHN III. 16.

——*That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

IN these words you have the love of God measured by a twofold standard: first, by the greatness of the gift which he hath bestowed upon the world, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son;* secondly, by the blessed end for which he did bestow him, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish*, &c.

The first of these I have already gone through; and now I shall proceed to the second, viz. the blessed end for which he gave his only begotten Son, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

In which words you have also two very great instances of God's infinite love and good-will to mankind.

The first is, His imposing upon us such a gentle, and easy, and merciful condition, *that whosoever believeth in him.*

IIdly, His proposing such a vast reward to us upon our performing of this condition.

I begin with the first, viz. His imposing upon us such a gentle, and easy, and merciful condition, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish.*

In the management of which I shall do these two things:

1. Shew you what it is that is included in this condition, *whosoever believeth in him.*

2. How good God hath been to us, in making the condition which he hath imposed upon us so gentle and merciful.

1. What is it that is included in this condition? To which I answer in general, that believing in Christ doth not only denote a naked assent to the truth of this proposition, *that he is the Son of God,* and the messenger of God's mind and will to the world, and the Saviour of mankind; but that it also includes whatsoever is naturally consequent thereunto. For thus it is very ordinary with the scripture to express the natural effects and consequents of things by their causes and principles. *This is the love of God,* saith the apostle, *that we keep his commandments,* 1 John v. 3. Whereas, in strictness of speaking, our keeping his commandments is only the effect or consequence of our loving him. So, Prov. viii. 13. *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil:* whereas indeed this is only the effect or consequence of the fear of the Lord. Thus by knowing, and hearing, and remembering of God, the scripture usually expresses the consequent effects of them. Thus, Acts xxii. 14. *The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will:* that is, that thou mayest not only know it, but by thy knowledge mayest be suitably affected with it: (for it was not to a bare contemplative knowledge that St. Paul was chosen:) and then it follows, *and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth;* that is,

that hearing the voice of his mouth, thou shouldest thereby be induced to obey it: for he was not merely to hear Christ speaking to him out of the heavens, but that hearing him, he might submit to his will, and become his apostle to the world. Many other places I might easily give you, where the natural effects and consequents are in scripture expressed by their causes and principles. And thus also faith, or believing, whensoever it is used in scripture to signify the condition of the gospel covenant, always implies its natural effects and consequents, that is, sincere and universal obedience to those rules of holy living which the gospel prescribes; for this is the most natural effect of our believing in Jesus Christ. And hence it is called *the obedience of faith*, Rom. xvi. 26. that is, the obedience which springs from faith, as from its cause and principle. And accordingly, Rom. x. 16. you find, that to *believe* and *obey* the gospel signifies one and the same thing: *But they have not all obeyed the gospel*, saith he: *for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?* that is, who hath believed so as to obey it? So that wheresoever faith is mentioned singly as the condition of the gospel covenant, it is apparent it must be understood in the largest sense, as comprehending that obedience which is the effect and consequence of it. So, 1 John v. 1. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God:* that is, whosoever so believes the truth of this proposition, as to practise upon it, and govern his life and actions according to the tenor and direction of it, is truly a child of God. For he who believes Christ to be the Messias, but continues obstinately disobedient to his laws, is so far from being truly and really a child of

God, that he thereby becomes ten times more a child of the Devil: for, saith the apostle, *if I have all faith, and have not charity, I am nothing.* And Gal. v. 6. *For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.* And if so, then faith itself is nothing abstracted from this blessed effect of it, i. e. *working by love;* for in Gal. vi. 15. he tells us, that *circumcision is nothing; but the new creature:* by which new creature he means an obedient temper and disposition of mind; as he plainly tells us, 1 Cor. vii. 19. *Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.* So that by these different variations of expression it is apparent, that by *faith,* as significant in the account of Christ, he always means a working faith, the effect of which is *the new creature,* or *keeping the commandments of God.*

And so I have done with the first thing proposed; which was to shew you what is included in this condition, *whosoever believeth in him:* which, you see, is not to be confined to a bare and naked belief of him; but must be extended further, even to that whole course of obedience which is the natural effect of such a belief. So that *whosoever believes in him,* is as much as if he had said, whosoever so believes in him as sincerely and universally to obey him.

2. I proceed now to the next thing; which was, to shew you how good God hath been to us, in making the condition which he hath imposed upon us so gentle and merciful; and this will appear, if we consider these five things:

1. That he hath put nothing into this condition,

but what is in its own nature exceeding good for us.

2. That he hath most mercifully proportioned the whole to the present state and circumstances of our nature.

3. That he hath rendered the whole almost necessarily consequent to our believing in Jesus Christ.

4. That, to beget that belief in us, he hath given us the most plain and convincing evidence.

5. That to render this belief operative, he hath engaged himself to assist, actuate, and enliven it, by his own immediate concurrence.

1. That God hath put nothing into this condition but what is in its own nature exceeding good for us. For there is no precept in all the gospel, but what contains either some effectual means or apparent instance of what is morally and eternally good; and whatsoever is morally good is naturally so. For the moral goodness of things consists in the fitness and reasonableness of them; and that which is the moral good, or duty of men, consists in doing that which is eternally fit and reasonable for them, considering the frame and circumstances of their natures, and the different relations wherein they are placed in the world.

But now, for men to do what is eternally fit and reasonable, is naturally good for and beneficial to themselves; because, by so doing, they perfect and advance their natures, and accomplish their own satisfaction and happiness. For our reason being that proper character of our natures that distinguishes us from all sublunary beings, and sets us in a form of being above them, the perfection of our nature must necessarily consist in being perfectly reasonable; in

having our understandings informed with the principles of right reason, and our wills and affections regulated by them: and when once we are released from the slaveries of sense and passion, and all our powers are so perfectly subdued to this superior principle of reason, as to do every thing that it commands, and nothing that it forbids; and we choose and refuse, and love and hate, and hope and fear and delight, according as right reason directs and dictates; then, and not till then, we are come to the full stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. Now, all the duty of the gospel being a *reasonable service*, as the apostle calls it, Rom. xii. 1. the end and tendency of it must be to habituate us to live according to the laws of right reason; which is all one as to advance us to the perfection of reasonable beings; and being once arrived at this, we shall find unspeakable satisfaction from within ourselves, and feel a heaven of joys springing up within our own bosoms. For when once our disjointed powers are set in order, and all our faculties reduced to their natural subordination, our nature will be in perfect rest and ease; being freed from that unnatural violence and oppression under which it now groans; and cured of all those spasms and convulsions of mind which are the inseparable effects of its lapse and degeneracy. And all the motions of our wills and affections being regulated by the eternal reason of our minds, with what delightful relishes and sweet gusts of pleasure shall we taste and review our own actions! they being always such as our best and purest reason doth approve of with a full and ungainsaying judgment. So that God's commands, you see, being all of them most reasonable, must necessarily tend to the perfection

and happiness of our nature; besides that they generally promote even our sensitive happiness, our pleasure, and profit, and reputation in this world. Now what a most endearing instance is this of God's goodness towards us, that he should make our benefit the measure of our duty, and oblige us to nothing but what is for our good! that he should so far concern himself in our happiness, as to impose it upon us under the penalty of his severest displeasure, and to enforce his laws with such inviting and such dreadful sanctions, only to secure us from running away from our own mercies! So that to be a Christian, is in effect nothing else, but only to be obliged to be kind to ourselves, and bound in conscience to be happy. Good God! that thou shouldest be so infinitely zealous of our welfare, as to make the means of it the only matter of thy laws; and promise such vast rewards, and denounce such dreadful punishments against us, for no other reason but only to affright and allure us out of misery into happiness! that thou shouldest hate our sins so implacably, only because they are our irreconcileable enemies; and be so infinitely pleased with our obedience, only because it leads to our endless bliss and perfection! And that it is thus is so plain and apparent, that we cannot but acknowledge it a most convincing instance of God's infinite goodness towards us.

2. That God hath most mercifully proportioned this condition to the present state and circumstances of our nature. He saw very well into what a deplorable condition human nature was reduced; how its strength was broken, and its health and vigour impaired and decayed; how its reason was clouded, and all its faculties depraved; how apt it was to be

surprised, and to act unadvisedly; sometimes for want of time, sometimes for want of order and distinction in its thoughts; how much it was hindered from acting regularly by intervening accidents, and how it was weakened and determined by the bad habits and necessities it had generally contracted: and seeing it reduced to this sad state, he hath most graciously accommodated its burden to its strength, and taken measure of its duty by its ability to discharge it. For though in his gospel he requires that we should *perfect holiness in the fear of God*, and *be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect;* that is, that we should advance to the utmost degrees and improvements in virtue that our natures are capable of; yet he requires this of us under such moderate penalties as are no ways destructive to our eternal happiness; such as the hiding his face from us, and other such like paternal severities and castigations; his correcting us with the rod of temporal judgments, and abating us in the degrees of our future happiness, proportionably to our moral defects and non-improvements; which penalties, though they are sufficient to quicken our endeavours, and excite us still to a farther progress from one degree of virtue to another, yet are they not such as do excommunicate us from heaven, or disseize us of the reward of our honest and sincere obedience. And indeed, should God have been severe in marking what we do amiss, and exacted of us, under the penalty of damnation, the utmost degrees and improvements that are possible for us to attain, no flesh would be saved; it being morally impossible for us, in this degenerate state, to do always the utmost good, or avoid the utmost evil that we are able: and therefore, out of a

tender regard to the weakness and infirmity of our nature, he hath only forbid those neglects and miscarriages, under this declaration, that they are inconsistent with the sincerity of our submission and obedience to him. But as for our moral defects, and infirmities, and surprises, though, so far as it is in our power to avoid them, they are truly sins against the law of perfection, and, as such, we ought to lament and beg pardon for them; yet, thanks be to a merciful God, *we shall only be chastened for them here, that we may not be condemned with the world*, as the apostle expresses it, 1 Cor. xi. 32. and reap less happiness in the other world for having sowed less degrees of good than we might and ought to have done in this; as the same apostle in 2 Cor. ix. 6. It is true indeed, as for wilful sinners, he hath concluded them (as it is very reasonable he should) under the sentence of eternal death; for should he let such go unpunished, he must even resign up his government, and leave the wretched world in a state of anarchy and confusion: but yet to these he hath extended as much kindness as was possible for a wise and gracious governor to do: for he hath not so irrecoverably concluded them under this direful sentence, but that still he doth indulge to them the saving remedy of repentance; having, for the sake of Jesus, and his all-sufficient propitiation, bound himself by promise to pardon and receive into his favour every wilful sinner in the world, if he will but repent of what is past, and amend for the future. Thus, to save the miserable world, he hath gone to the utmost borders of what is fit and reasonable, and done as much for us as it was possible for the justice and rectitude of his nature to admit of: for should he

have proceeded any further, he must have pardoned impenitent sinners; which he could not have done, without allowing and encouraging their rebellion: and to pardon an offender that persists in his fault, that is neither sorry for it nor willing to amend it, is utterly incongruous to all wise rules of government; and cannot be practised by any government, either divine or human, without endangering its own foundations. What then is there beyond this that we can modestly ask, or God wisely grant? If God had summoned us to his privy-council in heaven, and there promised to grant us any terms of salvation that we ourselves could think fit to propose to him, surely the utmost that any modest man could have asked would have been only this; "Lord! be but "so merciful as to consider the weakness and infir-"mity of our natures, so as not to cast us off for "every neglect or miscarriage that was only pos-"sible for us to avoid: and if at any time we "should be such wretches, as knowingly and wilfully "to offend thee, be but so gracious as to receive us "again into thy favour, whensoever we heartily re-"pent and amend: this is the utmost that we can "request at thy hands, and for this we will praise thee "on the bended knees of our souls, and adore thy "goodness for ever and ever." Why now, all this he hath freely granted us of his own accord: and is not this a most amazing instance of his goodness, that of his own free motion he should thus indulge to us the utmost mitigations that we could have modestly desired; and condescended so far to our weakness, that, without an unpardonable impudence, we cannot desire him to condescend yet farther?

3. That he hath rendered the performance of

the whole condition of our salvation almost necessarily consequent to our believing in Jesus Christ: for in that revelation of his will which he hath made by Jesus Christ, he hath pressed the performance of this condition upon us with such irresistible arguments, as must needs prevail wheresoever they are heartily believed and duly considered. What man can be so stupid as to trample upon Christ's law, that firmly believes and considers those glorious rewards it proposes to all that sincerely obey it? What pleasures of sin can seduce that man from his duty, who is firmly persuaded that after a few moments' obedience he shall swim in rivers of pleasures that flow from God's right hand for evermore? How can any man have the courage to violate the laws of our Saviour, who heartily believes and considers those direful punishments which he hath denounced against the transgressors of them? And what evils or miseries can scare that man from his duty, that is chained so fast to it by the consideration of that *wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men?* How can any man love his sins any longer, that believes and reads that bloody story of them that is written in the agony and passion of the Son of God? When we consider that *he was delivered for our offences*, and that our sins were the principal actors of all that woful tragedy; that they were these that betrayed, arraigned, and condemned him; that borrowed the throats of a barbarous rabble to cry out, *Crucify him, crucify him;* that buffeted and scourged him with the hands of the rude soldiers; that gored his sides with the spear, rent his sacred hands and feet with the nails that fastened him to the cross: how can

we believe and consider that our sins did thus barbarously treat the best friend we have in the world, without being all inflamed with indignation against them? Again, how can we reflect upon the dreadful displeasure God expressed against our sins in this dismal example of sacrificing his own Son for them, without being filled with horror, and struck into a trembling agony at the thought of them? Once more, how can we be so desperately foolhardy as to go on in our sins, if we believe and consider the article of the day of judgment, wherein we must give an account of whatsoever we have done in the flesh, whether it be good or evil; and stand or fall to all eternity, according as we have discharged or neglected this great condition of our salvation? These are such mighty arguments, as (one would think) it were impossible for men firmly to believe, and yet not be persuaded by them. Thus God, in his mercy and goodness to us, hath furnished the revelation of his Son with such prevalent motives, that our believing in him almost necessarily draws after it the performance of the whole condition of our salvation. For upon our believing in Jesus, and considering his proposals, we are compassed round about with so many puissant reasons to submit ourselves to his laws, as (one would think) all the temptations of the Devil and the world are not able to resist. So careful hath God been to secure us from sin and misery, that, knowing the force of our natural reason to be too weak to secure us, he hath sent us down these fresh auxiliaries from heaven; by whose assistance, if we do but trust to and employ them, we may easily repulse all the temptations of sin, and fight our way through all the difficulties

of our duty. *For this is the victory*, saith the apostle, *by which we overcome the world, even our faith*, 1 John v. 4. Which words are urged by him as an instance of the easiness and gentleness of our obedience to the gospel, which is the condition of our salvation: *For*, verse 3, saith he, *this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.* Well, but how doth this appear? Why, saith he, *for every one that is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* For *who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* verse 5. So that he proves the easiness of the gospel-commands by this argument, that the keeping them depends upon that faith by which we believe *Jesus to be the Son of God.* By this means, therefore, God hath mercifully rendered the condition of our salvation easy to us, by rendering the performance of it so necessarily consequent to our believing in Jesus; in which, how good he hath been to us will evidently appear, if we consider,

4. That to beget this belief in us, he hath given us the most plain and convincing evidence, viz. the evidence of those miraculous works wherewith he accompanied the ministry of our Saviour and his apostles, and sealed and confirmed it to the world; which, of all kinds of evidence, is the most apt to convince and persuade the world of the truth of any divine revelation: for this kind of evidence appeals to men's senses, and is such an argument as they may see, and touch, and handle; and men are generally apt to give more credit to their own

same infallible manner, till it was spread over all the world, and needed no farther martyrdoms or miracles to confirm it.

O blessed God! what care hast thou taken, first to provide, and then to secure the evidences of our holy religion, that all generations might have sufficient motives of credibility; and that mankind might still have abundant reason to believe in thy Son to the end of the world, when they shall see him come down from heaven to judgment! How easy therefore hath God rendered the condition of our salvation to us, when he hath not only rendered the performance of it so necessarily consequent to our believing in Jesus, but also, to beget this belief in us, hath given us such abundant evidence! How can we sufficiently admire and adore his goodness, that hath been so infinitely solicitous to secure our happiness; and hath so contrived things, that we cannot heartily believe his gospel, and not be persuaded by it to comply with the terms of our salvation; nor yet impartially consider the evidence of his gospel, and not heartily believe it! And yet, as if all this were not enough,

5. And lastly, To render this belief operative and effectual, he hath engaged himself to assist, actuate, and enliven it by his own immediate concurrence. Provided we use our own honest endeavour, he hath assured us again and again, that *he will give his holy Spirit to every one that asks; that he will work in us to will and to do*, if we will but take care to *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;* and that *to him that hath*, i. e. makes an honest improvement of that strength that he hath, *it shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly.* So that though one would have thought he

had done sufficiently for us before, in giving us such abundant evidence to beget in us a hearty belief of his gospel, and such prevalent motives to persuade us to submit to it, and comply with his gracious proposals: yet such was his goodness to us, such his importunate care of our welfare, that he could not stop here, nor think he had done enough for us, till, by an irrepealable promise, he had obliged himself to us to cooperate with us; and, by the immediate influences of his grace, to bless and succeed our honest endeavours. So that we can no sooner attempt our own restauration, no sooner set ourselves in the way to our happiness, but the good God is immediately present with us, exciting our faith, fixing our consideration, animating and encouraging our poor endeavours, and supplying us with all manner of grace and assistance that our state and necessities require. Nay, and many and many a time, while we are sleeping on in our wretched sinful security, he comes in pity to visit us, and ever and anon suggests good thoughts to our minds, to rouse and awake us out of those fatal slumbers, to enliven our faith, and call up our consideration; nay, and oftentimes he doth so urge, and second, and repeat those thoughts to us, that, by being so haunted with their importunities, we are forced to fix our minds on them, whether we will or no. And though we, like ungrateful wretches, do many times stifle his good motions, and turn a deaf ear to his calls and gracious invitations to happiness, yet doth he not presently give over; but whilst we are running away from him, we hear a voice behind us calling after us to return; and though we still run on, yet still he follows us with his importunities through the whole course of our

sinful life, till either he hath brought us back, or we have run ourselves past all hope of recovery.

These are things, I dare say, that every man in the world, one time or other, hath had experience of. And is not this a strange condescension of goodness, to see the God of heaven and earth thus courting and wooing a company of impotent rebels to lay down their arms, and accept his grace, and his everlasting preferments! And though they reject his motions, and stop their ears to those still whispers of his that secretly invade their souls; yet to consider how he still solicits and importunes them, as if he would take no denial, and had resolved not to let them alone, till he had persuaded them to be happy; O good God! what prodigious stories of love are these! what strange amazing condescensions to thy wretched undeserving creatures!

And now, after all this, what can the Lord our God do more for us, that is consistent either with his own wisdom or with the freedom of our natures? He hath done all that can be done to draw us to heaven; and if that will not do, it is by no means fit that he should drag us thither; since it would be a most unreasonable condescension in him to force us to be happy when we are unwilling to accept it; and to prostitute the reward of piety and virtue to those that scorn and reject it.

And now to conclude this argument; from hence I infer, how monstrously ungrateful those persons are who complain of the difficulty and burdensomeness of this gentle and merciful condition of our salvation; when in so many instances it is apparent, how merciful God hath been in imposing such a condition upon us.

In the name of God, what would you have, sirs? Would you have heaven drop into your mouths, while you lie still and do nothing? Or can you think it is fit that so vast a reward should be prostituted to the lazy wishes of such drones and sluggards as do not think it worth the labouring for? that those golden fruits should hang down from heaven to us on an over-laden bough, to be cropt by every idle wanton hand that will stretch forth itself to take and eat it? Surely no reasonable creature can be so senseless as to entertain such a wild and fond conceit. Well then, would you have God admit of such a condition of salvation, as includes in it a licence to enjoy your lusts, and gives you liberty to be as wicked as you please? But, alas! if God should be so fond of your salvation, as to offer violence to his own nature and government by yielding to your sins, and granting you a free dispensation to enjoy them; yet it is impossible in the nature of the thing; because your salvation will not consist with it. For to be saved from misery whilst we are let alone to enjoy our sins is a contradiction; and so not the object of any power, no, not of omnipotence itself. For sin itself is the greatest misery that human nature is liable to: it is this that convulses all its faculties, that racks and stretches them out of joint, and distorts them into an unnatural figure: it is this that makes us our own reverse, transposes our head with our feet, and makes our reason truckle to our sense; our intellectual faculties that were made to govern, to serve those brutish passions and appetites, which nature designed to be their vassals: which is such a barbarous violence to the very frame and constitution of our nature, as will, whensoever we recover out of

our lethargic stupidity, be as sensibly dolorous to our souls, as racks, or wheels, or catastas to our bodies. So that for God to save us from misery whilst he suffers us to continue in our sins, is altogether as impossible as it is to save us from burning whilst he suffers us to continue weltering in the flames of fire; and to make us well in sickness, or easy in diseases, are not more repugnant to the nature of things, than it is to make us happy in our sins: and yet this is the only matter we complain of, that God will not allow us a free dispensation to be wicked in that which is the condition of our salvation.

O blessed God! how is it possible thou shouldest ever please such froward, peevish, and ungrateful creatures, who will never be satisfied, unless thou performest impossibilities, and makest contradictions to be true for their sakes! For shame, therefore, let us no longer complain that the condition of our salvation is too hard and rigorous: but, since God hath been pleased to condescend so low to us, as to indulge whatsoever is consistent with our salvation, let us admire and adore his goodness, and, with our souls inflamed with love and gratitude to him, cheerfully undertake what he hath so mercifully enjoined us.

DISCOURSE XIX.

UPON

JOHN III. 16.

——*That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

I AM now upon the latter part of this text, *that whosoever believeth in him*, &c. In which there are two great instances of God's goodness to us.

First, His imposing upon us such a gentle and merciful condition, *that whosoever believeth in him.*

Secondly, His proposing to us so vast a reward upon the performance of it, *should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

The first of these I have handled already; and now I proceed to the second, viz. the vast reward he hath proposed to us upon the performance of this merciful condition. And in this you have,

First, The negative part of it, *that whosoever believeth in him might not perish.*

Secondly, The positive one, *but have everlasting life.*

I. I begin with the first of these, *That whosoever believeth in him might not perish.*

In prosecution of which argument I shall do these three things:

1. Shew you what is meant by perishing here.

2. By what right we were concerned in and obliged to it.

3. What unspeakable goodness God hath disco-

vered to us in freeing and absolving us from this obligation.

1. What is meant by perishing here, or not perishing? *That whosoever believeth in him should not perish;* that is, that whosoever believes in him might be pardoned, or absolved from the obligation of perishing for ever, to which his sins have rendered him justly liable. For that by this phrase, μὴ ἀπόληται, *he should not perish*, or be destroyed, is not meant the annihilation or destruction of our beings, as the Socinians and some others imagine, is evident, by its being opposed to everlasting life; which, as I shall shew you hereafter, doth not denote our mere continuance in life and being for ever, but our continuance in a most blissful and happy life for ever: and consequently, the destruction that is here opposed to it must not denote our eternal discontinuance to be and live, but our living most wretchedly and miserably for ever. And indeed, wheresoever death or destruction is spoken of, in opposition to eternal life, this is apparently the sense of it. So, Rom. vi. 23. *The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Now that by *death* here is understood a state of endless misery and suffering, in opposition to that state of endless happiness which *eternal life* implies, is evident; because he cannot mean the first death, which consists in the separation of the soul from the body: for though this were originally the wages of sin, yet in itself it is not so now, but the necessary condition of our nature; for whether we sin or no, we must undergo it, being obliged to it by the irreversible decree of our Maker. But the death here spoken of is the effect of our own personal sin, with-

out which we are not liable to it, as you may plainly see, ver. 21. *What fruit had ye then in those things* (i. e. those sins) *whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things,* or sins, *is death.*

Wherefore, since it cannot be meant of the first, it must be meant of the second death, which St. John makes mention of, Rev. ii. 11. *He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.* And what that is, the same author tells you, Rev. xx. 14. *And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death;* that is, this lake of fire, or the torments and miseries which condemned sinners endure in it, is the second death: for so he explains himself, ver. 10. *And the Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.* And this is that death which is opposed to the immortal rewards of the blessed, as you may see, Rev. xxi. 7, 8. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things;* that is, all those immortal recompenses which God has prepared for virtuous souls. *But the fearful and unbelieving,* &c. *shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

And as *death,* when opposed to *eternal life,* denotes a state of endless and continued misery, so doth *destruction* also. So, Matt. vii. 13, 14. *Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction. Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life.* By the latter of which, it is granted on all hands, he means life eternal; and that by *destruction* he means a state of endless misery is evident from Matt. x. 28. *But fear him which is able to destroy both soul and*

body in hell: which, according to St. John's exposition, Rev. xx. 10. is to torment them *day and night for ever and ever.* And this destroying in hell our Saviour elsewhere expresses by *casting into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched:* which is as plain a description of an endless state of misery as words can express: for how is it possible that annihilation should signify either a fire that never goes out, or a worm that never dies: so also 2 Thess. i. 9. *Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord;* meaning the wicked persecutors at Christ's coming to judgment. Now that by that *everlasting destruction* he means a state of endless suffering and torment, is evident, if we consider the description which our Saviour gives of that punishment to which the wicked shall be sentenced at the last day; *Go ye cursed,* saith he, *into everlasting fire,* Matt. xxv. 41. And lest we should fancy that it is the fire only that is eternal, but not the punishment, verse 46. of that chapter, *And these,* saith he, *shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.* And that they do actually exist in this fire, and continue in the torment of it, is evident by those actions that are therein attributed to them; such as *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,* Matt. xiii. 42, 50. Which actions are plain indications, not only of their subsisting in this everlasting fire, but of the extreme horror and anguish they shall therein endure. And as this fire is said to be everlasting, so the everlastingness of it is described so as to exclude all limits, and prescind from all determinations. For fire must be extinguished

ere it can cease to burn; and therefore that which cannot be extinguished can never end; but such is that fire whereunto the wicked are condemned at the day of judgment; so Matt. iii. 12. *Whose fan is in his hand,—but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.* And that the sufferers shall be no more extinguished than the fire that burns them, is evident from Rev. xiv. 11. *And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night.* And how can the smoke of this fire be said to be *the smoke of their torment ascending up for ever and ever,* unless they exist in it *for ever and ever;* especially considering what follows immediately after, *they have no rest day nor night.* Which expression is the same with that by which the same author signifies the eternal happiness of good men: so Rev. iv. 8. *they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy;* and Rev. vii. 15. *They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.* And if *day and night* here, when applied to the state of heaven, denotes the continued blissful employment of the happy souls there for ever; then, for the same reason, when it is applied to the state of hell, it must denote the continued miseries of the damned there for ever. Well then, if the fire of hell be everlasting, yea, if it be so absolutely everlasting, as that it is unquenchable; and if those that are cast into it shall be tormented *for ever and ever,* all which the scripture doth directly teach; then it necessarily follows, that the wicked must subsist in their miseries for ever, and be coeternal with the flames that torment them. The reason therefore why that future punishment to which our sins do consign and oblige

us is called by the name of *destruction*, *perdition*, and *death*, is not because it puts a final period either to our being or subsistence, as some fondly dream, but because it for ever separates and disjoins us from God, who is the better and the nobler life of man; and from all those sweet perceptions of comfort and pleasure, of which life is the principle. And there is no language, phrases, or expressions can be supposed to patronise a contrary opinion, since the same scriptures which say that the wicked shall be destroyed, and perish, and die, say also, that they shall be tormented with never-dying pains, as they plainly and frequently do. This I have the longer insisted upon, because it is a very dangerous thing for men to be deceived in this matter, not to know the worst of the consequents of their own follies; but to expect an easier and a shorter hell than ever they are like to find. And so I have done with the first thing proposed, viz. what is here meant by perishing; and proved to you at large, that hereby is meant living miserably for ever.

2. I proceed now to the next thing proposed, viz. how we came to be concerned in and obliged to this dreadful penalty? To which I answer, that originally we were hereunto obliged by the law of our nature: for man being naturally an immortal creature, must necessarily be for ever liable to the natural effects of his own actions: and therefore since misery is the natural effect of sinful actions, if we continue sinners for ever, we must necessarily continue miserable for ever: and if God should have inflicted no other miseries upon wicked souls, when they are separated from their bodies, than what are necessarily consequent to their own wickedness, these

would be an hell of insufferable torment to them. So that from the very immortality of our natures, we are capable of everlasting perseverance in sin; and from our everlasting perseverance in sin, we are fatally damned to everlasting misery. And as by the law of our natures we are thus bound over to eternal punishment, so are we also by the positive sentence and determination of God; who hath not only obliged us to obey him, under the penalty of enduring for ever the miseries that are naturally appendant to our sins, but hath added thereunto all those positive torments which the lake of fire and brimstone, and the horrors of the outer darkness do imply: for so in his word he hath plainly declared to us, that if, after he hath tried us to the utmost, we will not be reclaimed, but are so desperate as to proceed in our wickedness, maugre all the arts and methods he can use to reduce us, he will at last shut us up in a state of endless and irreversible torment. And this is no more than what he might very justly and rightfully do: for he being the supreme lawgiver of the world, hath an immutable right to enforce his laws with such penalties as are sufficient to secure them from being violated by his subjects: for otherwise he would be defective in his power of legislation: for how could he have sufficient power to make laws, if he had not right to enforce them with sufficient penalties? But we that are his subjects, being apt to offend, and so extremely liable to temptations thereunto, no less penalty could be sufficient to secure our obedience, than that which is eternal: for which reason he hath enforced his laws with the threatening of it. And if God thought no less than the threatening of eternal punishment ne-

cessary to deter men from their sins, what less than the execution of that threat can be sufficient to render them examples of his severity against it? For threats without execution are but mere scarecrows; and it is highly unreasonable for us to be afraid of any threat which we have reason to conclude shall never be executed upon us. Wherefore, since the sovereign Lord and Governor of the world hath in himself an unalienable right to enforce his own laws by what penalties he pleases, and since to enforce them in the highest degree he hath established them under the penalty of eternal torment; it is no less reasonable for him to execute this penalty, than it is to threaten and denounce it; otherwise his threats will be altogether insignificant. For the end of legal threats is to terrify the subject from disobedience: but since we are assured that God will do nothing but what is just and reasonable, why should we be terrified at any threats of his, which he cannot as reasonably inflict as denounce against us? Nor is it any blemish to the divine goodness, that he hath threatened such an heavy punishment against those that transgress his laws: for since he hath enjoined us nothing but what is for our good, and tends to our happiness, and since the end of his threats is to oblige us to observe his injunctions; it hence necessarily follows, that the more terrible his threatenings are, the more he obliges us by them to pursue our own happiness. And certainly, for God to lay his creatures under the strongest obligations to be happy, is so far from being a blemish to his goodness, that it is a most glorious expression of it: and if we will be so obstinate as to incur that direful penalty, under which he hath obliged us to be happy, it is

but just and reasonable that he should inflict it upon us, and make us feel for ever the rueful effects of our own folly and madness. Wherefore, since we had all broken his laws, and wilfully rendered ourselves guilty before him, we therefore became most justly obnoxious to this most dreadful penalty of perishing for ever. And thus you see by what right we were concerned in and obliged to this penalty.

3. I now proceed to the third and last thing proposed; which is to shew you the unspeakable goodness that God hath expressed to us in that way and method which he hath prescribed, to release us from this obligation of perishing for ever. For the way and method prescribed by him is this, to send his own most blessed Son to suffer in our stead; that so we, repenting of our sins and forsaking them, might upon the account of his sufferings be released from this obligation to eternal punishment. And hence Christ is said *to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, Heb. ix. 26. that is, to make expiation for it, even as the Jewish high priest did by those sacrifices which he offered. And accordingly, Col. i. 14. it is said, that *in him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*; that is, upon condition we heartily and sincerely repent of them. For *if we walk in the light*, saith the apostle, *as he is in the light;* that is, if we forsake our sins, and become *pure* as he is *pure*, and *holy* as he is *holy*, *we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin*. 1 Ep. John, i. 7. This therefore being the way and method which God hath prescribed to release us from the obligation to eternal punishment, what an unspeakable love and goodness

he hath herein expressed to us will evidently appear in the consideration of these four things:

1. His admitting of another to suffer in our stead.

2. His exacting such a suffering for the price of our pardon, as was most effectual to secure us from sinning again.

3. His consenting that his own Son should submit to this suffering.

4. His choosing to grant pardon to us upon his suffering as a sacrifice for our sins.

1. One very great instance of God's love and goodness to us in this method of pardon, is his admitting of another to suffer in our stead. Had he been pleased, he might have exacted the punishment of the criminals, and made the offenders smart for ever in their own persons; yea, and this he might have justly done, notwithstanding the best reason they could render him to the contrary. For the best reason a sinner can render why he should not be punished, is his hearty repentance: for next to being perfectly innocent, the best thing we can do is to reform when we have done amiss; but yet this doth not at all diminish the guilt and demerit of our past transgressions. For repentance doth not at all alter the nature of the act, nor make it less evil nor less deserving of punishment: and therefore, since the act itself obliges us to punishment, our repentance of it doth no ways cancel the obligation. It is true, God might, if he had pleased, have pardoned us upon our repentance, without any other reason or motive: but it is certain, that repentance is not a sufficient reason to move him to declare a promise of pardon to a sinful world; it being no way consistent with the safety, either of divine or human governments,

so far to encourage offenders, as to indemnify them universally by a public and standing declaration, merely upon their future repentance and amendment; because, by such a declaration, they must let loose the reins to all manner of licentiousness. For if subjects are now so prone to transgress, when they have so much reason to expect a severe punishment for it; how much more prone would they be, were their governors so easy as to assure them beforehand, that the punishment due to their crimes should be immediately remitted upon their unfeigned repentance! Wherefore, since our repentance is no sufficient reason to oblige God to pardon us, and much less to move him to make a promise of pardon to us; and since this is the best reason that we can offer in our behalf, to move him thereunto, it hence necessarily follows, that, if he had pleased, when once we had broken his laws, he might have justly executed upon us that eternal punishment which he had threatened, notwithstanding all we could have done to move him to the contrary.

But such is his inexpressible goodness towards us, that to put himself into a capacity of pardoning penitent sinners with safety to his government, and of making a public grant of pardon and indemnity to them, thereby to encourage them to repent, he hath graciously admitted another person to suffer in our stead, that so neither their persons might be ruined, nor yet their sins be unpunished; and that he might sufficiently express to them his severity against their sins without exposing them to the eternal smart of it. For though the suffering of this person, as I shall shew you by and by, was a sufficient reason to move God to forgive us upon our unfeigned repent-

ance; yet it was no such reason as did necessarily oblige him thereunto: for if he had pleased, he might have righteously exacted our punishment at our own hands, and made us for ever rue for our own folly and madness. But such was his goodness towards us, that, for the sufferings of the innocent, he hath mercifully acquitted the punishment due to offenders, and so scourged our sins upon the back of our Saviour: for though he suffered for us, yet we suffered not in him; our persons were not at all damnified by those bitter agonies which he endured for our sins: so that, to a wonder of mercy, they have been so severely punished, as it is fit they should; and yet we, who were the authors of them, never felt the smart. Blessed God! how merciful hast thou been to thy creatures, that hast thus found out a way to distinguish the sin from the sinner; and so to punish the one as to let the other escape! for by this gracious admission, *Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*, 1 Peter iii. 18.

2. Another instance of God's love and goodness to us in this method of pardon is, his exacting such a suffering for the price of our pardon, as is most effectual to secure us from sinning again; which is a plain instance of the mighty care he hath taken to pardon us in such a way as might be most for our future security. For it would have been no way proper for the wise Governor of the world to grant a general pardon to offenders, without some sufficient reason moving him thereunto. Now, that repentance, which is the best reason we can offer him, is not sufficient, I have already shewed you, because it is not sufficient to secure his government, in the good

management whereof the welfare of all his subjects is involved. For his laws requiring nothing but what is for our good, it is truly our interest to be kept under a strict obedience to them: so that, should he pardon us upon any reason that is not sufficient to secure his government and our obedience, it would be a public nuisance and damage to mankind; and consequently, the greater the reason is that moves him to pardon what is past, and the more it enforces our obedience for the future, the greater is the goodness which he expresses in pardoning us, and the more it conduces to our welfare and happiness. But now upon what higher motive could he have made a grant of pardon to us, than upon the most meritorious sufferings of his own Son for us? For since nothing that we could do was a sufficient reason to move him to promise to us the forgiveness of our sins, it was requisite that something more should be done for us by some other person; and the greatest thing that any other person could do for us, to move God to forgive us, was to suffer in our stead; because hereby, not only a public acknowledgment is made of what we have deserved for our sins, but something of the punishment due to them is paid as a public satisfaction to the law. So that if God pardons us upon such a reason, he doth by the same act express his most tender mercy to us, and his implacable severity against our sins: for by pardoning us upon the sufferings of another in our stead, he expresses his hearty good-will to us, and openly signifies how unwilling he is to ruin us. But then, by exacting the sufferings of another in our stead, before he will be induced to grant a pardon to us, he manifests to us how implacably he hates our sins, and how inex-

orably severe he is against them. But then, if he pardon us upon this reason of another's suffering in our stead, then the greater and more excellent the person is that suffers for us, the greater reason he hath to forgive us upon it. For such as the person is that suffers, such is the moment and value of his suffering: because the end of all such vicarious punishments being only this, to give such an example of the severity of governors against offenders, as may be sufficient to vindicate the honour of the law, and secure the obedience of the subject; the value of his suffering, who thus suffers for us, must consist in this, that this is a more or less exemplary signification of the severity of the lawgiver against our sins, for which he suffers: and doubtless it would be a higher signification of God's severity against our sins, not to pardon us but upon the sufferings of an innocent angel, than not to pardon us but upon the sufferings of an innocent man.

What a most exemplary signification then is this of his severity against our sins, that he would not pardon us but upon the sufferings of his own most innocent Son; who being the greatest person in all the creation, did, by his suffering in our stead, exhibit the greatest instance of God's severity against our sins, that could possibly have been given by any person whatsoever, that was capable of suffering for us! So that his suffering in our stead was apparently the best and highest reason that could possibly have been given to move God to pardon us; and consequently his pardoning us in such a way, and upon such a reason, is a most glorious instance of his goodness towards us, and of that tender regard he hath of our welfare. For now, in the very method of his

pardoning us what is past, he hath taken a most effectual course to secure our obedience for the future; that very reason that moved him to pardon us being the greatest reason that can be urged to terrify us from sinning again. For what consideration is there that can fill us with greater horror against our sins than this, that the guilt of them is so great and heinous, that the most merciful Father would never have forgiven them, had not his own most glorious Son suffered for them in our stead?

And indeed, had not God thus provided for the securing of our obedience in the very method of his pardon, his grace in pardoning us would have been very insignificant: for our welfare and happiness being all bound up in our obedience, our pardon without this could not have secured us from being miserable. So that if in the method of his pardon he had not so manifested his severity against our sins, as to discourage us sufficiently from sinning again, his very mercy and compassion would have proved destructive to us; because it would have encouraged us to sin on, and thereby to make ourselves miserable. For sin and misery are so inseparably interwoven, that all the pardon God can give us, while we continue in our sins, is not sufficient to prevent our being miserable. But such hath been his goodness towards us, such his care to prevent our sin and misery, as that in the very reason that moves him to pardon us, he gives us a most terrible warning not to sin again: for he that can behold such a dreadful spectacle as the Son of God dying for sin, and yet sin on, is a valiant sinner indeed, and may with the same courage follow his lusts into the flames of hell. So careful hath the good God

been to plot and contrive for the welfare of his creatures, that he would not so much as pardon them when they had offended him, but in such a way as was most for their security and good.

3. His consenting that his own Son should submit himself to this suffering, is another great instance of his goodness towards us, in this method of pardoning us. That he should not only admit of a sacrifice to bear our transgressions, and suffer in our stead, but that himself should provide one for us, and such a one too as his own most dear Son, is such a miracle of love and goodness, as the whole creation cannot parallel. For though mankind had provoked him to that height, that none but a God of infinite patience could have borne it, yet such was his unwillingness to inflict that direful punishment upon them, which he had justly threatened, and they had justly deserved, that, notwithstanding all their demerits, he was still vehemently inclined to be propitious to them. But then, how to save them, and at the same time so to manifest his severity against their sins, as was needful to preserve the authority and honour of his laws that had threatened destruction to them, was the great difficulty: for should he have wholly omitted the punishment, he would have very much undervalued the authority of his laws in the esteem of his subjects, the main security of their authority being the punishment annexed to them; but on the contrary, should he have exacted the utmost of the punishment, he must have destroyed the whole race of men, we being all offenders in his sight.

In this extremity therefore, that he might pardon such a world of sinners with safety to his govern-

ment, it was highly necessary for him to exhibit to the world some dreadful example of his severity against them, such as might be sufficient to prevent offenders from taking any encouragement from his pardoning them, to offend again. But to make a sinner such a great example of his severity against the sins of others, was impossible; because his own sins may deserve the utmost severity that God can inflict upon him: and therefore, among ourselves, who were all sinners, there was no person could be found fit to be made such an example of his severity against the sins of the whole world. And if an innocent angel should have offered up himself to bear our punishment, and suffer in our stead, his suffering in our room would not have so sufficiently expressed God's severity against the sins of a whole world of sinners as was convenient: for what great severity would it have been to have exacted the suffering of one innocent angel, in lieu of that eternal punishment that was due to a whole world of men? Wherefore, it being highly convenient that the dignity of the person who suffered for us should be such as might render his suffering, in some degree, proportionable to the punishment due to our sins; that so his suffering in our stead might be as exemplary to the world, as if we ourselves had suffered to the utmost of our desert; and there being no creature of that dignity either in heaven or earth; in this extremity, the eternal Son of God himself interposes, and freely offers to unite himself to our natures, and therein to suffer in out stead; upon condition, that upon our unfeigned repentance and amendment, a free charter of pardon might be granted for all our past provocations.

So that now an expedient being proposed, by

which God might both pardon our sins, and sufficiently manifest his severity against them, to secure the authority of his laws, and deter us from sinning again; though he saw how dear an expedient it would prove, that it would cost him the most precious blood of his own Son; yet such was his tender pity towards us, so great his unwillingness to ruin us for ever, that he freely complied with the motion, and consented that his Son should be sacrificed for the sins of the world. And hence it is said, that *he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*, Rom. viii. 32. And the reason why he delivered him up, as he tells us, verse 3. of the same chapter, was to *condemn sin in the flesh*; that is, to pronounce, in the suffering of his own Son for it, what a dreadful punishment it deserved, and how much his soul was incensed against it, that would not pardon it without such a mighty propitiation.

How inexpressibly gracious therefore hath God been to us, that when, for the securing the authority of his laws, it was so necessary to condemn our sins, rather than condemn them in our own personal punishment, he should choose to condemn them in the sufferings of his own Son! It was a great instance of his goodness towards us to admit of another to suffer for us in our stead; but to admit of his own Son, who is the darling of heaven, and the delight of his soul; and not only so, but freely to give and deliver him up for us, and amidst all the yearnings of his fatherly bowels towards him, not to spare his precious life when it was to be made the price of our redemption, is such a miracle of love as transcends all hyperboles.

4. And lastly, His choosing to grant pardon to us

upon the sufferings of his Son as a sacrifice for our sins, is also another great instance of his goodness to us in this way of pardoning us. For the end of granting pardon to sinners upon their repentance, being to encourage them to repent, it was highly convenient to grant it to them in such a way, and upon such a reason, as might most effectually assure them thereof. And considering what was the general persuasion of mankind in this matter, there was no such effectual way to secure them of pardon upon their repentance, as this of granting pardon to them upon the motive of a sacrifice for their sins. For however it came to pass, I know not, but it was a principle generally received by men of all nations and religions, that to appease the incensed Divinity, it was necessary, first, that some sacrifice should be made to him for their sins; and then, that some high favourite of his should intercede with him in their behalf: upon which were founded those two great rites of propitiatory sacrifices and worshipping of demons, which made up a great part of all the heathenish religions in the world. For as for propitiatory sacrifices, they were generally used, not only by the barbarous, but by the most civilized heathens; which sacrifices they devoted unto God, to be their proxies in punishment, to undergo the punishment that was due to them for their own sins. And hence is that of the ancient poet,

> *Cum sis ipse nocens, moritur cur victima pro te?*—
> When thou thyself art the offender, for what reason should the victim die for thee?

And Porphyry tells us, (Abstin. l. 4.) that the first rise of the sacrifice of animals was, τίνας καιροὺς ψυχὴν ἀντὶ ψυχῆς αἰτουμένους, "certain occasions requiring

"that a soul should be offered up for a soul;" that is, the life of a beast for the life of a man: for it was the constant opinion, that the more worthy the sacrifice which they offered, the more effectual it was to appease their offended divinities. And hence in many places the ordinary sacrifice of atonement which they offered, was the lives of men: and though this indeed was the most used in the most barbarous countries, yet, in cases of great danger and extremity, the Greeks and Romans themselves did frequently sacrifice human lives to their gods: for so it is recorded of the Romans, that when their city was in great danger of being taken by Hannibal, they sacrificed a man to their tutelar god: and Servius tells us of the Massilians, that in time of pestilence, one of the poorer sort was wont to offer himself to be sacrificed for the whole city; who being for a whole year nourished with the purest meat, was then led about the city adorned with sacred vestments and cathartic herbs, the people following him, making solemn execrations, that the plague might be removed from the city and fall upon his head; which done, they offered him up in a sacrifice. And in other places they offered up pure virgins of the noblest families to propitiate their angry gods: and elsewhere, as Servius tells us, they were wont to cast a man into the sea with this imprecation, Περίψημα ἡμῶν γένου, that is, "Be thou our purgament," or redemption. So also it is said of the Athenians, that they maintained some of the most unprofitable and ignoble of the people, that so, when any great calamity befell the city, they might offer them up in sacrifice to appease their gods. And that passage of Cæsar concerning the Gallic nation, is very observ-

able; that in cases of great danger and calamity, they either devoted themselves to the altar, or else offered up some man in their stead; *quod pro vita hominis, nisi hominis vita reddatur, non posse deorum immortalium numen placari arbitrantur;* that is, "thinking that the immortal gods would never be "appeased, unless they offered up to them the life of "man for the life of a man." All which is an evidence that they not only thought sacrifices necessary to appease God, but that they also believed, the better the sacrifice was, the more effectually it did appease him. Nor did they think it less necessary that there should be some intercessor between them and the supreme Divinity, to solicit their cause, and render him propitious to their desires. And hence it was the general doctrine of their divines, that it was great profaneness for any thing that was earthly and sinful immediately to approach that pure and divine Being; but that the demons were to be the mediators and agents between him and mortal men. *Θεὸς ἀνθρώπῳ οὐ μίγνυται, ἀλλὰ διὰ δαιμονίων πᾶσά ἐστιν ὁμιλία καὶ ἡ διάλεκτος Θεοῖς πρὸς ἀνθρώπους*, as Plato in his Sympos. expresses it; that is, "God is not to be "approached by men; but all the commerce and "intercourse between him and us is performed by "the mediation of demons."

So that howsoever they came by this principle, it is apparent that they generally believed both sacrifices and a mediator to be necessary means to reconcile them to God; and that without these they could not satisfy themselves that God would be propitious to them; no, not upon their repentance and reformation. Some good hopes they might have, and it is apparent they had, from the goodness and benignity

of the divine nature; that if they forsook their sins, God would not be inexorable to them; at least, they could not tell but they might find mercy: but yet they durst not absolutely trust to this, without devoting some other to suffer in their stead, and engaging some other to intercede in their behalf. And therefore we see, that when the king of Nineveh, upon Jonah's preaching, obliged his people to fasting and repentance, the utmost encouragement he could give them was only this; *Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?* Jonah iii. 9. Wherefore, to give us the highest assurance of pardon if we repent, God hath been so infinitely good to us, as to choose that very method of reconciling us to himself, which we had chalked out to him; and to meet with us in our own way, thereby to give us a fuller assurance of his most gracious and merciful intentions to us: for how could he have better satisfied the anxiousness and jealousy of our guilty minds, than in granting us our pardon in that very way wherein we did so universally hope for and expect it? Good God! how indulgent hast thou been to thy poor creatures, that wast not only so ready to pardon them upon their repentance, but so careful to give them the most effectual assurance of it, that so thou mightest remove all discouragement out of the way to our amendment and happiness! For doubtless, the reason why he took this way of pardoning us more than another, was not only because it was best in itself, and most for the interest of his own government, but also because of all others it was the most effectual to satisfy our guilty fears, and assure us of his merciful intentions to receive us

into favour again upon our repentance and amendment. For when mankind were so unanimously agreed in this belief, that without a sacrifice and a mediator he would not be appeased; how could he more effectually have convinced our mistrust of his mercy, than by sending his own Son to be our sacrifice and mediator; to die for our sins upon earth, and intercede for our pardon in heaven? So that if now we will heartily repent of our sins, and forsake them, we have all the security of mercy that we can desire; our God being atoned by the noblest sacrifice that ever was, and interceded with on our behalf by the most powerful and prevailing Mediator. Having therefore such *an High Priest over the house of God*, we may safely *draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith*, as the apostle expresses it, Heb. x. 21, 22. Thus you see how good and gracious God hath been to us in the way and method which he hath prescribed of pardoning our sins, and releasing us from the obligation of punishment for ever: which is so wise and good, and every way godlike, that, I think, had I no other reason to believe the Christian religion but only this wondrous contrivance of pardoning sinners, revealed in the gospel, this would have been enough to persuade me that none but a God could be the author and contriver of it. And now I shall conclude this argument with a few inferences.

1. From hence I infer, what a very great evil sin is, seeing it is such an evil as binds us over to perish for ever; and such as nothing can make expiation for, but only the precious blood of the Son of God; such as our Saviour must die for, or our souls must have suffered for to all eternity. How different

good as to give his Son for us whilst we were in impenitence, should be so implacable as to deny his love to us upon our repentance and amendment? Was it not a much higher act of love to give his Son for sinners, than to receive poor prostrate penitents into favour? He then who was so free to do the former, we might well imagine, would be much more free to do the latter. Or lastly, dare we plead for ourselves, that, considering the anxiousness and jealousy of guilty minds, God hath not given us such security of his readiness to pardon and be reconciled to us, as was requisite to dispel all those fears and doubts by which we were discouraged from repentance and amendment?

But how weak and groundless this plea is, will soon appear to all the world, when it shall be considered what an effectual course God took to obviate all our doubts and fears, by pardoning us in our own method; namely, upon the motive of a sacrifice, and intercession of a mediator; especially of such a sacrifice and mediator as his own Son: for let him be never so severe and stern, yet it is impossible he should be inexorable to the vocal blood and importunate intercessions of that dear person, whom he loves above all the world. And now, when God had so contrived the method of his pardoning us, as to take from us all occasion of presuming upon his mercy whilst we continue impenitent; when he hath taken such an effectual course to raise both our hopes and fears, which are the springs of our action, to their highest pitch and capacity; and given us the greatest certainty that the nature of the thing will bear, that he will punish us for ever, if we sin on,

and pardon and receive us into favour, if now at last we will repent and return; what can we say for ourselves, if, in despite of all this, we will run from mercy, whilst its arms are open to embrace us, and leap into hell with our eyes open, and we see it gaping ready to devour us?

DISCOURSE XX.

UPON

JOHN III. 16.

——*But have everlasting life.*

I AM now upon the last branch of the text, which is, to shew you the great goodness of God to us in promising to us such a vast reward, upon our performing such an easy condition, as our believing in Jesus Christ. In which reward there is,

First, The privative part of it, or the misery it rescues us from, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish.*

Secondly, The positive, or the happiness it instates us in, *but have everlasting life.*

In the management of which I shall do these two things:

I. Shew you why this reward is termed *everlasting life.*

II. How unspeakably good God hath been to us in proposing to us such a vast reward.

1. Why this reward is styled by the name of *everlasting life:* for it is very usual with scripture to express all the blessings it promises to men by the name of *life.* For thus by *life* the Old Testament very frequently expresses those temporal blessings which are therein promised and proposed. So Deut. xxx. 15. *See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil:* in which he plainly refers to those temporal blessings and curses which he had proposed to and denounced against them,

ch. xxviii. For so, ver. 19. of this chapter, he explains himself; *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.* So Levit. xviii. 5. *Ye shall keep my statutes and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them:* that is, he shall enjoy all those temporal blessings which I have therein promised. For so, Ezek. xx. 21. their *living in them* is opposed to his pouring out temporal judgments upon them. And hence the statutes of the Mosaic law are called *the statutes of life, in which whosoever walks shall surely live and not die,* Ezek. xxxiii. 15. And as these temporal blessings promised in the Old Testament are commonly expressed by *life*, so those eternal blessings promised in the New Testament are very frequently expressed by *life* also. So Matt. xviii. 8. *It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.* So also Matt. xix. 17. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments:* and John iii. 36. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.* And because the blessings which the gospel proposes are not temporal, but eternal, therefore that life by which they are expressed is styled *eternal, everlasting*, and *immortal.* For so, 2 Tim. i. 10. we find life and immortality joined together. And Rom. vi. 22. *Ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life:* and ver. 23. *The gift of God is eternal life.* Now, that it is not called *eternal life*, merely as it is a state of endless being and

existence, is evident; because being and existence are indifferent things, abstracted from all sense of happiness and misery; but eternal life is proposed to us as a thing that is infinitely desirable in itself, as being the crown and reward of all our obedience: for which reason it is called the *crown of life*, James i. 12. And therefore the reason why the everlasting blessings of the gospel are expressed by *life* are,

First, Because of the inestimable worth and value of life.

Secondly, Because life is the root of all our sense of pleasure and happiness.

Thirdly, Because it is the principle of all our activity.

1. The everlasting blessings of the gospel are called *life*, because life is the most inestimably precious of all the blessings we enjoy. For without life there is nothing can be a real blessing to us, nothing that we can taste, relish, or enjoy: and this the Devil knew well enough when he pronounced so confidently, *Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life*, Job ii. 4. Now it is usual with scripture to describe the blessings of a future state by things that are of the greatest value among men, by riches and treasure, by a crown and a kingdom, by a paradise, or a garden of pleasure: but, as if all these were too faint and dim to represent the true value of that blessed state, it is styled *life* also, which is much more valuable than either, yea, than all those things together. And hence the apostle calls it *a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

2. It is called *life*, because life is the root of all our sense of pleasure and happiness. For without

life we are nothing else but a lump of stupid and insensible flesh, incapable of perceiving either pleasure or pain. So that all sensation being founded in life, and all pleasure a sweet and grateful sensation, by a very easy figure the natural effect and operation of life is expressed by life. And indeed all the advantage of living consists in living in a sense of pleasure; and therefore it hath been very much disputed among philosophers, whether this temporary state of ours, in which there is so great an intermixture of pain with pleasure, and misery with happiness, doth not better deserve the name of death than life: and those of them who thought it more liable to misery than happiness, affirmed it to be a state of death, and strictly maintained this paradox, that at our birth we die into a worse state than non-existence; and at our death are born into a true and proper state of life. But they who counted our present life to be intermixed with more pleasure than misery, esteemed our present existence a privilege deserving the name of life; which is an argument that both placed all the privilege of living in those pleasant perceptions that are founded in it. And thus also, according to the scripture-philosophy, to live, as it imports advantage to us, is to live in a state of joy and pleasure; so Psalm xxii. 26. *The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever;* that is, you shall so abound with matter of joy and praise, that your hearts shall be satisfied and contented for ever. So John xiv. 19. *Because I live, ye shall live also;* that is, Because I rise from the dead, and live for ever, ye shall rejoice and be glad. So also 1 Thess. iii. 8. *For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord;*

less the best and utmost that our narrow capacities can bear. In short therefore, concerning this blessed state, God hath revealed to us that it includes these six things:

1. A perfect freedom from evil and misery.

2. A most intimate enjoyment of himself.

3. A most endearing fruition of our glorified Saviour.

4. A most delightful conversation with angels and glorified saints.

5. The infinite glory and delightfulness of the place wherein all these felicities are to be enjoyed.

6. The endless duration of this most blessed and happy state.

1. Everlasting life includes a perfect freedom from evil and misery. For so we find the state of the blessed in heaven described, that *they hunger no more, neither thirst any more;* that *the sun lights not on them, nor any heat;* that is, that they are no longer liable to the scorching heats of persecution, but that *God hath wiped away all tears from their eyes,* Rev. vii. 16, 17. And hence also heaven is called a state of rest, Heb. iv. 9, 11. *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest:* which denotes this state to be a perfect sabbath and jubilee of redemption from all evil and misery. For as soon as the souls of good men depart out of this corporeal state in which they now live, they are immediately released from all those bodily passions of hunger, and thirst, and pain, and diseases, whereunto they are now liable by reason of their union with the body: and having in a great measure conquered their wills while they were in the body, and subdued

them to the will of God, they shall immediately commence into an high degree of perfection. For being freed from the encumbrances of flesh and blood, from the importunities of their bodily passions and appetites, and the temptations of sensuality, that do now continually solicit them, they shall no longer be liable to those irregularities of affection that do here disturb the tranquillity of their minds; and their actions and affections being always regulated by their reason, their consciences shall be no longer bestormed with those terrors and affrightments, which nothing but the sense of guilt can suggest to them, but enjoy a perpetual calm and serenity: and being thus freed from all evils and disquietudes, both from within and without, they shall be at perfect ease, and for ever enjoy a most undisturbed repose. O blessed day, when I shall take my leave of sin and misery for ever, and go to those calm and blissful regions, whence sighs, and tears, and sorrows, and pains are banished for evermore!

2. *Everlasting life* includes a most intimate enjoyment of God. For God, being a rational good, is capable of being enjoyed by rational beings no otherwise than by knowledge, and by love, and by resemblance; all which ways he hath promised that we shall enjoy him, when once we are arrived into that blissful state. For as for the knowledge of him, St. Paul tells us, that whereas *now we see through a glass, darkly; we shall then see* him *face to face:* and whereas now *we know in part; then we shall know even also as we are known*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And St. John tells us, that *we shall see him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2. Which expressions must needs import such a knowledge of him as is unspeakably more distinct and clear, than any we enjoy in this

present state. For the eyes of our minds shall be so invigorated, that we shall be able to gaze on the sun without dazzling; to contemplate the pure and immaculate glory of the divinity without being confounded with its brightness; and our understandings shall be so exalted, that we shall see more at every single view, than we do now in volumes of discourse, and the most tedious trains of inference and deduction. And enjoying a most perfect repose, both from within and without, we shall have nothing to disturb or divert our greedy contemplations; which having such an immense horizon of truth and glory round about them, shall discover farther and farther, and so entertain themselves with everlasting wonder and delight. For what an infinite pleasure will that all-glorious object afford to our raised minds; which then shall no longer labour under the tedious difficulties of discourse, but, like transparent windows, shall have nothing to do, but only to receive the light which freely offers itself unto them, and shines for ever round about them; when every new discovery of God, and of those bottomless secrets and mysteries of his nature, shall enlarge our capacities to discover more, and still new discoveries shall freely offer themselves as fast as our minds are enlarged to receive them! This doubtless will be a recreation to our minds infinitely transcending all that we can conceive or imagine of it; especially, considering that all our knowledge shall terminate in love, that sweet and grateful passion that soothes and ravishes the heart, and dissolves it into joy and pleasure; for God being infinitely good and amicable, the more we know him, the more cause and reason we have to love him. When therefore we are arrived to that

degree of knowledge which the beatifical vision implies, we shall find our hearts inflamed with such a vehement love to him, as will issue into an unspeakable delight and satisfaction, and even overwhelm us with excesses of joy and complacency; for if those divine illapses, those more immediate touches and sensations of God, which good men do sometimes experience in this life, do so affect and ravish them, that they are even forced into triumphs and exultations; how will they be rapt and transported in that state of vision, when they shall see him so immediately, and love him so vehemently, and their souls shall be nothing else but entire globes of light and love, all irradiated and inflamed with the immediate effluvias of the fountain of truth and goodness! But, alas! as these joys are too big for mortal language to express, so are they too strong for frail mortality to bear: and if we but for one day or hour should see God, and love him as those glorified spirits do, we should, questionless, die with an ecstasy of pleasure; and our glad hearts being tickled with such insupportable joys, by endeavouring to enlarge themselves to make room for them, all would quickly stretch into a rupture. But then, as our knowledge of God shall terminate in the love of him, so both together shall terminate in our resemblance of his perfections; for having so immediate a prospect of his beauties, and being so infinitely enamoured with them, with what inexpressible vigour must we imitate and transcribe them! And our imitation being invigorated with such a clear knowledge, and such a vehement love, cannot fail of producing the described resemblance: so that the more we know God, the more we shall love him; and the more we know

and love, the more we shall imitate and resemble him. So that then both our inward motions and outward actions will be all most pure and perfect imitations of God; which will produce such an exact agreement between his original and our copy, that whilst we interchangeably turn our eyes to God and ourselves, and compare beauty with beauty, it will fill our minds with unspeakable content, to see how the image answers to the prototype; what a sweet harmony and agreement there is between his nature and our own. For if from our love of God there must necessarily result to us such ineffable joy and complacency, what a ravishing delight will it afford us, to see the signatures of those adorable beauties, for which we love him, stamped and impressed upon our own natures; when the glory that shines about, and inflames us, shall shine into us and become our own; and those amiable ideas of him, which are impressed upon our understanding, shall stamp our wills and affections with their own resemblance! For so the apostle tells us it shall be, 1 John iii. 2. *For when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* Lord, how must our souls be enlarged and widened, to be able to contain all those mighty joys that must necessarily spring from our fruition of thee! and to what a degree of happiness shall we be advanced, when we shall be entertained with all the delights that the enjoyment of an infinite good can afford us; and have hearts great enough to contain them all, without being overcharged with their weight and number!

3. *Everlasting life* includes a most endearing fruition of our glorified Saviour. And certainly this is none of the smallest ingredients of that blissful state,

that we shall *ever be with our blessed Lord;* as the apostle expresses it, 1 Thess. iv. 17. For herein it is evident the same apostle placed one great advantage of his future state: for so he tells us, he had *a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better,* Phil. i. 23. And indeed it is impossible but it must be a vast addition to the happiness of all virtuous and grateful souls, to see this blessed friend and benefactor, who came down from the bosom of his Father, and for their sake exposed himself to a miserable life and shameful death; to see him sitting at his Father's right hand crowned with majesty and honour, surrounded with the whole choir of angels and saints, like a sun in the midst of a circle of stars. How must it needs rejoice the hearts of all the lovers and followers of this blessed Lamb, to see such a happy change of his circumstances; to see him that was formerly despised and spit on, and so unworthily treated by an ill-natured world, adored and worshipped, praised and admired, by all the court of heaven, and celebrated with the songs of cherubims and seraphims, of archangels and angels, and *the spirits of just men made perfect;* to behold him that hung upon the cross, and poured out his blood there in groans and agonies, merely to make miserable sinners happy, advanced to the highest pitch of splendour and dignity, and made head and prince of all the hierarchy of heaven. Verily methinks, though I were excluded from that happy place, and had only the privilege to look in and see my blessed Lord and Saviour, it would be a most heavenly consolation to me to behold the glory, and honour, and happiness with which he is surrounded, though I were sure never to partake of it; and the communion I should

have in the joys of my Master, the sweet sympathy in all his pleasures, would be a heaven at second-hand to me; and I should feel myself unspeakably happy in being a spectator of his felicity and advancement. But O, when that dear and blessed Person shall not only permit me to see his glory, but introduce me into it; when his blessed mouth shall bid me welcome, and pronounce my *Euge, bone serve! Well done, good and profitable servant; enter into thy Master's joy;* when I shall not only see his beloved face, but be admitted into his sweet conversation, and dwell in his arms and embraces for ever; when I shall hear him record the wondrous adventures of his love, through how many woful stages he passed to rescue me from endless misery; how will my heart spring with joy and burn with love, and my mouth overflow with praises and thanksgivings! O blessed Jesu! how happy will the day be, when I, who am loaded with so many vast obligations to love thee, shall be introduced into thy presence, to see thy glories, and sympathize in thy joys as thou didst in my miseries; to thank and praise thee face to face for all those wonders of love with which thou hast obliged me; and to bear a part in that heavenly song, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; who hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation,* Rev. v. 12. 9.

4. *Everlasting life* includes a most delightful conversation and society with angels and glorified spirits. For when we come to *the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,* the apostle tells us what our society will be, viz. *an innumerable com-*

pany of angels, and *the general assembly and church of the firstborn, God the judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant*, Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24. Lord, what glorious society is here! society in which there is nothing intermingled but what is heavenly and divine; it being altogether composed of the best, and wisest, and noblest beings in the world. For as for the blessed saints and angels, they are all most perfectly refined from all that folly and peevishness, disguise and dissimulation, which is the bane of human conversation; their understandings are exceeding large and comprehensive, and their charity and goodness is full as extensive as their knowledge: and in such a conjunction of wisdom with goodness, what an excellent society must there needs be produced! for as their great goodness must needs render their conversation most free and amiable, so must their great knowledge and wisdom render it no less profitable and delightful: and as the latter must needs instruct them in all the wise arts of endearment, so the former must needs oblige them to use and improve them to the utmost. O, how heavenly therefore must their conversation needs be, whilst it is thus managed by pure wisdom and most perfect love, whilst the most glorious knowledge is the scope, and the most ardent friendship the law of all their converse! Who would not be willing to leave a foolish, froward, and ill-natured world, for the blessed society of those wise friends and perfect lovers? and what greater happiness can we desire than to spend an eternity in such sweet conversation, where we shall hear the deep philosophy of heaven freely communicated in the wise and amicable discourses

of angels and glorified spirits, who mutually impart the treasures of each other's knowledge, without any reserve or affectation of mystery; and freely philosophize, without wrangling disputes, or peevish contentions for victory; where wisdom is the entertainment, and love and mutual endearments the welcome; where there is harmony without discord, communication without disputes, and everlasting discourse without wrangling. O happy day, when I shall depart from this impertinent and unsociable world, and all my good old friends that are gone to heaven before me shall meet me on the shores of eternity, and congratulate my arrival to that blessed society! where I shall freely converse with the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs, and be most intimately acquainted with all those brave and generous souls, who have recommended themselves to the world by their glorious examples; where angels and archangels shall be my familiar friends, and all those illustrious courtiers of the great King of heaven shall own me for their brother, and bid me welcome to their Master's joy; and none will disdain my company, though never so much above me in glory and perfection, but, from the highest to the lowest, will all receive and entertain me with the tenderest endearments of heavenly lovers.

5. *Everlasting life* includes also the infinite glory and delightfulness of the place wherein all these felicities are to be enjoyed. For though the very state of the blessed be sufficiently glorious to transform the most dismal place into a paradise, and to create a heaven in the darkest dungeon of hell; yet such hath been the goodness of God, that he hath prepared a place proportionably glorious to that

blessed state; which, according to the scripture account, is the *highest heaven*, or the upper and purer tracts of the ether. For so our Saviour tells the penitent thief, *To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise*, Luke xxiii. 43. And where this paradise is, St. Paul informs us, 2 Cor. xii; for verse 2. he tells us of his being *caught up into the third heaven*, which in the 4th verse he calls *paradise, where he heard unspeakable words*. Now that by *the third heaven* he means the uppermost, viz. that heaven of heavens which is the throne of God's most glorious residence; where Jesus sits at his right hand among the holy myriads of angels and glorious spirits, is evident from this; because, according to the Jewish philosophy, to which he here alludes, heaven was divided into three regions, viz. the cloud-bearing, star-bearing, and angel-bearing region; the last of which they called *the third heaven*, in which they placed the throne of the divine Majesty. And that by paradise he means the same place, is as evident, because by this name the Jews, in whose language he speaks, were wont to call it the third heaven, or angel-bearing region. And hence Rab. Menachem on Leviticus tells us, it is apparent that the reward of our obedience is not to be enjoyed in this life, *verum post dissolutionem justus adipiscitur regnum, quod dicitur paradisus, fruiturque conspectu divino;* i. e. "but after death the just shall obtain that "kingdom which is called paradise, and there enjoy "the beatifical vision." And it is very usual for them to express the blessings of a future life by enjoying the delights of paradise; and therefore is this heavenly region of angels called by the name of *paradise*, in allusion to the earthly paradise of Eden;

denoting to us, that as that was the garden of this lower world, which of all other places did most abound with pleasures and delights; so this is the paradise of the whole creation, the most fruitful and delightful region within all this boundless space of the world. Nor indeed can it be imagined to be otherwise, it being the imperial court which the great Monarch of the world hath chosen for his special residence, and which he hath prepared to receive and lodge the glorified human nature of his own eternal Son, and to entertain his friends and favourites for ever. For if these out-rooms of the world are so royal and magnificent, how infinitely splendid must we needs imagine the presence-chamber of the great King to be, the glory of whose presence will render it more lightsome and illustrious than the united beams of ten thousand suns. And therefore, though the scripture hath no where given us an exact description of this glorious place, because indeed no human language can describe it; yet since God hath chosen it for the everlasting theatre of bliss and happiness, we may reasonably conclude, that he hath most exquisitely furnished it with all accommodations requisite for a most happy and blissful life, and that the house is every way suitable to the entertainment. Whensoever therefore a pure and virtuous soul gets free from this cage of flesh, away it flies, under the conduct and protection of angels, through the air and ether, beyond the firmament of stars; and never stops, till it is arrived to those blessed abodes, where God and Jesus, saints and angels dwell; where being come, with what unspeakable delight will it contemplate that scene of things! when all of a sudden it shall see itself surrounded

with an infinite splendour and brightness, so that which way soever it casts its eyes, it is entertained with new objects of wonder and delight; then shall it say, as the queen of Sheba did of Solomon's court, Alas! how faint and dim, how short and imperfect were all human conceits and descriptions of this blessed place! for though I have heard great and mighty things of it, yet now I find that not one half of its real glory and magnificence hath ever been reported to me.

6. And lastly, *Everlasting life* includes the endless duration of this most blessed and happy state. Thus, John vi. 27. he calls his doctrine the *meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you:* and verse 40. he tells them, that *this was the will of his Father, that every one that believeth on him might have everlasting life.* And verse 47. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.* And ver. 51, 54, 58. he promises them, that upon their *believing in him, they should live for ever.* But because *everlasting life* and *for ever* doth in scripture sometimes signify a *long*, but not an *endless* duration; therefore he hath taken care to express this article in such words as must necessarily denote an endless duration of bliss: for he not only tells them, chap. vi. 50. that they who believed his doctrine should *not die;* but that *whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die,* John xi. 26. yea, and not only so, but that they should *never see death,* John viii. 51. that is, should never come within ken or prospect of it: nay, and Luke xx. 36. he tells them, *neither can they die any more; for they are equal to the angels.* If then our future

life be so everlasting, as that it neither can nor shall be terminated by death, it must necessarily be a life without end, whose duration is parallel to eternity. Now what a mighty addition must this needs make to the joys of the blessed, to consider that they are such as shall never expire; when the soul shall reflect upon her happy state, and think thus with herself: "O blessed for ever be a good God! I "am as happy now as ever my heart can hold; every "part of me is so thronged with joy, that I have no "room for any more: and that which completes and "crowns them all is, that they shall be renewed to "all eternity; and millions of millions of ages hence "be as far from a period as they were the first mo-"ment I enjoyed them." For our lives and our happiness shall be coeternal to one another; our God shall live for ever, and we shall live for ever to enjoy him; and in the enjoyment of such an infinite good, we need not doubt to find variety enough still to renew our joys, and to keep them fresh and flourishing for ever. For as we shall always know God, so we shall always know him more and more; and every new beauty that infinite object discovers to us will kindle a new flame of love, and that a new rapture of joy, and that a new desire of knowing and discovering more; and so for ever round again, there will be knowing, and loving, and rejoicing more and more to all eternity. For so immense will our happiness be, that we shall need, as well as desire, an eternity to enjoy it fully; and after millions of ages are spent in the enjoyment of it, we shall still renew our fruition with the same fresh enravishing pleasures as when we first possessed and enjoyed it: for as new pleasures will

still present themselves unto us, so, when we have enjoyed them never so long, we shall still be at an infinite distance from any end of our enjoyment. So that our happiness consisting of an infinite variety of pleasures extended to infinite duration, we shall neither be cloyed with the repetition of it, nor tormented with the fear of losing it.

And now you see how vast and immense the reward of our obediential belief of our Saviour is. I need not tell you that it is a plain and apparent instance of God's great love and good-will to the world: for it is indeed such a transcendent instance, as may justly astonish the whole creation, and put both heaven and earth into an ecstasy, to see the benevolent Father of the world project such mighty entertainments of such undeserving children; and prepare such a heaven of boundless and endless pleasure, to treat such a company of wretched sinful worms. O thou infinite love and goodness! how can we sufficiently admire and praise thee, that from such a depth of sin and misery hast projected to raise us to such an height of glory and felicity! But this will yet more evidently appear, if from the absolute consideration of this reward, we descend to the comparative, which was,

II. The second thing we proposed to discourse of, viz. to shew how vast this reward is in respect of the condition or consideration upon which it is promised or proposed. And this I shall endeavour to make appear to you in these seven particulars:

1. The condition is due, but the reward is free and arbitrary.

2. The condition is no ways advantageous to God, but the reward is infinitely advantageous to us.

most happy being that now he is and ever was. For all true happiness being founded in perfection, it is impossible that any being that is infinitely perfect in himself should become either more or less happy by any thing that happens from without him. So that as to the happiness of God, it is the same thing whether we obey or disobey him: so that whatsoever condition he imposes on us, our performance of it is but just like bringing wax to a dying father; which he requires, not to enrich himself, but only to seal away fortunes to his children.

And that he imposes this condition on us rather than another, is, not because it is more advantageous to him, but because it is most conducive to our welfare and happiness. So free and uninterested is his love and goodness to us, that, upon considerations no ways advantageous to himself, he promises infinite advantages to us: for it is we reap all the profit, as well of the condition as of the reward appendant to it; and he promises us heaven upon terms that carry heaven in the performance of them. For first the condition perfects our natures, and then the reward beatifies them: for there is nothing in the condition of the Christian covenant, but what our own self-love, rightly directed, would oblige us to; nothing but what tends to our good, and is highly conducive to our perfection and happiness. So that whatsoever advantages accrue, either from the condition or the reward annexed to it, they all redound to ourselves. So infinitely bountiful is our blessed Master, that with vast wages he hires his servants to a work that is a noble reward to itself, and courts them with the promise of heaven to be kind and merciful to themselves. O thou boundless and bot-

tomless love! what tongue is able to express thy beneficence, that hast prepared and promised a heaven of endless and ravishing joys and pleasures, only to tempt and bribe thy creatures to do what is good for themselves; and, without any prospect of self-advantage, hast obliged us to be our own benefactors, by promising to reward us for being so, with a most glorious and blissful immortality.

3. The condition is small, and easy to be performed, but the reward is immense and boundless. For what doth the Lord our God require of us, but only to act like men, and follow the prescriptions of right reason? which, if there had never been any law given to the world, nor any reward annexed to the keeping it, would have prescribed to us to live *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world:* for, prescinding from all obligations of law and conscience, to do thus becomes all reasonable natures, and is much more for their interest and happiness than the contrary. And is this so hard a restraint, to be confined to do nothing but what becomes us, and withhold from nothing but countermining our own happiness? But then, if we consider how our duty is sweetened over with pleasure, encouraged with the smiles of God, and backed with the approbations of our own consciences; with what gentle mitigations it is required, with what puissant motives it is enforced, and with what powerful grace it is assisted and promoted, we must acknowledge it to be a most gracious, easy, and gentle yoke. But if we measure it by the vastness of the reward, I confess it looks like some great and mighty thing. For if we value God's bounty by our own, we cannot but conclude, that sure he would never have made

such vast preparations for our happiness, nor planted such a paradise of pleasures to entertain us, but upon some mighty condition to be performed on our part.

And indeed had he imposed the hardest condition in the world, sent us to row in the galleys or dig in the mines for a thousand years together, such a vast reward would have been sufficient to have rendered it not only tolerable, but easy and delightful. But that he should promise us such a mighty recompense as the joys of an everlasting heaven includes, a recompense as large as our utmost capacities, and as lasting as our longest duration; and this upon no other condition but our sincere belief of and obedience to his gospel, whose precepts are all natural and easy, and pregnant with unspeakable pleasure and delight, is such a prodigy of goodness, as we can never sufficiently admire and adore: that merely for believing a revelation, of whose truth we have such a convincing evidence, and practising suitably to our belief, we should, from wretched mortal worms, be advanced to an equal pitch of bliss and glory with immortal angels, and live as happily for ever as all the joys of heaven can make us, is doubtless such an instance of love and bounty, as could only proceed from infinite goodness.

4. In performing the condition, God operates more than we; but in receiving the reward, we only are concerned. For to our sincere belief and obedience of the gospel, it is plain that God contributes much more than we: for besides that he is the author of all those faculties by which we do believe and obey him; of all those evidences by which we are convinced of the truth of his gospel; and of all those

motives by which we are animated in our obedience to it: besides all which, I say, he is also the author of all that inward grace and assistance by which our pious endeavours are excited, and crowned with a blessed success. And considering how much all these things do operate upon our performance of the gospel-condition, it is not only true, that without God's grace we should never have performed it; but also, that in our performance of it, that is the main and principal agent: and no man ever yet became a hearty believer and disciple of Jesus, but was much more beholding to the grace of God than to his own activity and endeavour. And hence we are said to be *created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, Eph. ii. 10. Not but that God exacts the concurrence of our endeavours with his grace; and that in the performance of the gospel-condition, as well as in any other affair of our lives. For it is the blessing of the Lord that makes men rich as well as good; and we may as well expect that he should make us rich without industry, as good without diligence and endeavour: but when we have done our utmost, it is to the grace of God, as to the principal cause, that all our good is to be attributed. But yet, though it is he that works this condition in us, that is *the author and finisher of our faith;* yet the reward doth wholly redound to ourselves, as if we had been the authors and finishers of all: and though he hath the greatest share in the work, yet he substracts nothing at all from the wages, but pays us infinitely more than the utmost merit of the work amounts to. He gives us faith, and then he crowns his own gift with glory, and honour, and immortality. He sows and cultivates our nature, that we may reap the crop and

harvest. So infinitely liberal is our blessed Master, as to reward his servants for his own work, to undergo the greatest part of their labour, and when it is done, to pay them ten thousand fold for it.

5. The condition is momentary and temporal, but the reward is eternal. It is but a little while that the labour of our duty lasts; for constancy and perseverance will soon render it natural and easy; and if it doth not, yet death will quickly put an end to all; and within these very few days or years, we shall see an everlasting period of all the pains of our watchfulness, of all the severities of mortification, and of all the sorrows of repentance; but then the reward abides to all eternity, and lasts out a never-ending duration. So that though we shall soon see an end of our work, yet the wages is so vast, that we shall be spending on it for ever, and myriads of myriads of ages hence shall be rejoicing in the fruits of our present labour, and reaping the blissful effects of our faith and obedience to the latest moment of eternity. O thou liberal rewarder of men! who can sufficiently admire thy goodness, that remuneratest our short pains with endless pleasures, and exchangest with us an eternity of happiness for the labour of a moment! For when we are arrived into that vast eternity of bliss, all the pains we have taken in our voyage thither will hardly bear the proportion of a single unit to an infinite sum; for what are twenty or thirty years but a moment to ten thousand thousand? and what are ten thousand years but a moment to an endless eternity? So that, methinks, when I consider that after ten, or twenty, or thirty years' service, I shall be allowed an eternity to spend in the most ravishing joys and pleasures, and live as

happily for ever as God and an everlasting heaven can make me; the bounties of my blessed Master appear in such a prodigious bulk to me, that I am even confounded at the prospect of them; and all this time I have to spend in religion, in prayer, and watchfulness, in subduing my passions and appetites, and contending with my own inclinations, seems nothing to me; but, like a little rivulet, is swallowed up in that boundless and bottomless duration, where it loses itself, and is no more remembered by me.

6. In the performance of the condition, there are great intermixtures of pleasure with our labour; but in the reward, there is not the least intermixture of misery with happiness. That man must be very much unexperienced in a Christian life, who thinks it a melancholy, sour, and rigorous thing: for besides that it freely indulges to us all the innocent gratifications of our senses, and all the refreshments of honest mirth and moderate recreation; it hath so many choice and peculiar pleasures of its own, as are sufficient to endear it unto all wise men, though it had no other reward to recommend it: for all the acts and functions of it being most agreeable to human nature, must needs be highly grateful to it. For what can be more agreeable to a reasonable nature, than to adore and love, to praise and confide in the Fountain of its being and happiness? and being so agreeable, how can they but abound with pleasure and delight? What can be more suitable to a sociable nature, than to be kind and obliging, courteous and beneficent to all we converse with? and being so suitable, how is it possible but it should be sweet and delightsome? In a word, what can be more convenient to a nature that is compounded of an immor-

tal spirit and a mortal body, than to keep the body in subjection to the mind, and govern its appetites and passions by the rules of reason and sobriety? and being so convenient, what content and satisfaction must there needs accrue from it? For the pleasure of every being consists in acting agreeably to its own nature; and therefore, since to act religiously is so agreeable to the nature of man, it is impossible but it must be pleasant; especially considering how much it conduces to the tranquillity of our minds, and the peace of our consciences, and the advancement of our interests in both worlds: all which being considered, I dare boldly affirm, that if there were no other reward of a religious life, but only its own appendant delights, yet this were enough to recommend it unto any wise man; and that there never was any man whatsoever, that made a thorough experiment of it, but found it far more pleasant and agreeable to him, than the most jovial course of wickedness and impiety. And yet to this pleasant life it is that the good God doth tempt and invite us by the promise of a heaven of pleasures: and though the life he wooes us to hath joy and bliss enough to compensate all the toil and labour of it; yet, to oblige us hereunto, he hath made it a most certain passage to a life of pure and unmingled bliss, that hath not the least alloy of misery in it: for from that most blissful region all pain and sorrow, trouble and vexation, are banished for evermore. There are no winter-frosts of grief to nip or blast its everlasting spring of joy; no clouds to darken or overcast its light; but we shall know without mistake, love without jealousy, obey without reluctancy, praise without complaint or murmuring, and rejoice for ever with-

out sighing or disturbance. Lord! what amazing bounty is this, that thou shouldest crown the most pleasant life upon earth with a most pure and unmingled life of pleasures in heaven; and make one paradise the reward of another! How deeply art thou concerned in our welfare, that, to oblige us to live happily here, hast prepared a heaven of pure and endless happiness to entertain us hereafter!

7. And lastly, The condition admits of intermissions of labour; but in the reward there are no intermissions of happiness. The performance of the condition doth not so wholly take up our lives, as to admit of no interruptions: for besides that it not only permits, but requires us to mind our secular business and affairs; and is so far from interfering with the work of our callings, that it promotes and furthers it; it doth not so wholly engross our time, as not to allow us a sufficient season for our rest and recreation; so that we may perform all that it includes or requires, without breaking of a night's rest, or abridging ourselves a meal's meat, or retrenching from our mirth and diversions, any further than reason and sobriety requires; and consequently, abstracted from the work of our callings, which, though it be included in this condition, yet even our temporal interest obliges us to follow, it is by so much the smallest portion of our lives which we are obliged to spend in the exercise of our religion. And if we would make but moderate retrenchments from that time we spend either in doing nothing, or nothing to the purpose, and, together with that, reprieve those precious moments we squander away in serving and pampering of our lusts, we might serve God faithfully every day, and yet have as much time remain-

ing to do our business, and enjoy our pleasures, as now: we might every morning say our prayers, renew our resolutions, and arm ourselves with considerations against the temptations of the day; and every night review the actions of the day, confess and lament the defects of them, and recommend ourselves to God's grace and protection for the future; and when all this is done, have as much time as ever we had before to mind our affairs and divert ourselves. Nay, so far would this be from any ways hindering our business or diversion, that the sweet sense of having done our duty would make us much more cheerful in the one, and give us a far sweeter relish of the other. So far is religion from enslaving us to an uninterrupted toil and labour, that it doth not only allow us all the intermissions that our secular business, reflection, and pleasure requires; but also sweetens them to us, and renders them much more grateful. But as for the reward which religion draws after it, that excludes all intermissions of happiness. For in that most blissful state our life will be all but one continued act of joy; and to eternal ages there shall not be one moment wherein we shall either be sensible of pain, or insensible of pleasure and happiness. For as our happiness will always abound with fresh pleasures, so our faculties will never be cloyed with the enjoyment of them: for those pleasures being pure, rational, and spiritual, will be so far from spending and weakening our powers, that they will every moment strengthen and improve them. So that whereas our pleasures here, consisting in a vehement motion, are very transient, and quickly slip away, and we must rest a while before we can renew them, and begin the motion

again; those heavenly pleasures are such as will indeed most vehemently affect and move, but never weary the faculties of the enjoyer. For still the more we know, the more we shall love; and the more we love, the more we shall rejoice; and the more we rejoice, the more we shall know and love: and so in this sweet but endless circle, we shall move round for ever without weariness; and be so far from spending our vigour, that every moment of eternity we shall improve it by exercise and motion. So that as our happiness will always abound with new pleasures, without any discontinuance or intermission; so our faculties will always renew their strength and vigour by enjoyment. And as there will be no pause between one joy and another, but they will come so thick upon us for ever, that the follower will always tread on the foregoer's heels, so one will still make room for another; and those that are present will enlarge our capacity to receive all those that are immediately to follow. And thus shall we spend an eternity without the least intermission of joy and pleasure: for we shall always know, and always love, and always praise the author of our happiness; and always have a fresh sense of his goodness soothing and ravishing our hearts, and filling them with ineffable joys, without any ceasing or interruption. O blessed God! what an amazing demonstration is this of thy love and goodness to thy creatures, that for a work in which there are so many pauses and daily intermissions of labour, thou shouldest crown us with a reward, that to all eternity is one continued scene of happiness without the least gap or interruption! So that whether you consider this reward absolutely and in itself, or comparatively with the condition

whereunto it is annexed, you see it is a most glorious instance of God's unspeakable goodness towards us: and now I shall conclude this argument with a few practical inferences from the whole.

1. I infer how much reason we have to be contented and satisfied, under all the present afflictions of this life. For shall we receive so much good at the hands of God as everlasting life implies, and not be contented to receive some evil, when our good Father hath provided for us a crown of endless bliss and glory hereafter? With what conscience or modesty can we complain of those little paternal castigations he inflicts on us here, especially considering, that the great design of all his present severities is to prepare and discipline us for that heavenly state; that by all these dismal providences he is only training us up for a crown; fitting, instructing, and disposing us to reign with him in glory for ever? Can any thing be unwelcome to us that is in order to so blessed an end? can any physic be nauseous or distasteful that is prescribed to recover us into such an happy immortality? No, doubtless; every thing that leads heavenwards, though never so grievous, is a blessing; and all those kind severities that tend to our eternal welfare are favours, for which we are bound to praise and adore the goodness of Heaven for ever. When therefore we find ourselves inclined to complain under our present pressures and afflictions, let us lift up our eyes to yonder blessed regions, and consider the joys and pleasures, the crowns and triumphs, that do there await us, and how necessary these bitter trials are to prepare us for and waft us to them: and if this doth not stop our mouths, and silence our complaints for ever; nay, if it doth not cause us to

rejoice in our tribulations, and to thank God for them on our bended knees; if it doth not make us cheerfully submit, and say, *Ure, seca, vulnera;* "Lord! cut, or wound, or burn me; if thou seest fit, "strip me of all my dearest comforts; handle me as "severely as thou pleasest, so I have my *fruit unto* "*holiness, and my end everlasting life;*" we are infinitely foolish and ungrateful. For it is but a little while ere all these storms will clear up into an everlasting calm; ere all these dismal clouds will vanish, and an everlasting day break forth upon us, whose brightness shall never be obscured with the least spot or relick of darkness. And when that blessed time comes, Lord, how trifling and inconsiderable will all our present griefs appear! With what contempt shall we reflect upon our present cowardice and meanness of spirit, that would not bear without murmuring with a few inconveniencies on the road to such an immortal heaven of pleasure! Wherefore, if our voyage be not so pleasant as we would have it, yet let us remember it is not long; we have but a short day's sail to an eternity of happiness; and when once we are landed on that blessed shore, with what ravishing content and satisfaction shall we look back on the rough and boisterous seas we have past, and for ever bless the storms and winds that drove us to that happy port! Then will the remembrance of these light afflictions serve only as a foil and antimask to our happiness, to set off its joys, and render them more sweet and ravishing. Let us therefore comfort ourselves with these things; and when at any time our spirits are sinking under any worldly trouble or affliction, consider, that while we have a heaven to hope for, we can never be miserable: for

so long as we are guarded with this mighty hope, our mind will be impregnable against all foreign events; and, maugre all afflictions from without, its serenity will shine as undisturbedly as the lights of pharos in the midst of storms and tempests.

2. Hence I infer what a vast deal of reason we have to slight and contemn this world. For it is plain, that we are born to infinitely greater hopes than any this world can propose to us, even to the hopes of everlasting life: and being so, methinks our ambition should soar as high as our hopes, and disdain such low and ignoble quarries, as the pleasures, and profits, and honours of this life. Certainly, sirs, we mistake the scene of our eternity, or imagine that it is removed from heaven to earth, and so we are to enjoy our everlasting life below; or else we are most strangely besotted, who, when we are born to live for ever above, in the most ravishing glory and happiness, can suffer ourselves to dote upon this world, and to be so strangely bewitched as we are by its deluding vanities. O, could we but stand a while in the midway between heaven and earth, and at one prospect see the glories of both; how faint and dim would all the splendours of this world appear to us in comparison with those above! How would they sneak and disappear in the presence of that eternal brightness, and be forced to shroud their vanquished glories, as stars do when the sun appears! And whilst we interchangeably turned our eyes from one to the other, with what shame and confusion should we reflect upon the wretched grovelling temper of our own minds! What poor mean-spirited creatures are we, to satisfy ourselves with the impertinent trifles of this world, when we have all the joys

of an everlasting heaven before us; and may, if we please, after a few moments' obedience, be admitted into them, and enjoy them for evermore! Ah! foolish creatures that we are, thus to prefer a far country, where we live on nothing but husks, before an everlasting festivity, that is celebrated in our Father's house, where the meanest creature hath bread enough and to spare! to choose Nebuchadnezzar's fate, and leave crowns and sceptres, and live among the salvage herds of the wilderness! Could the blessed saints above divert so much from their more happy employments, as to look down a little from their thrones of glory, and see how busy poor mortals are in scrambling for this wretched pelf, which within a few moments they must leave for ever; how they jostle, and rencounter, defeat, defraud, and undermine one another; what a ridiculous spectacle would it appear to them! With what scorn would they look on it, or rather with what pity, to see a company of heaven-born souls, capable of and designed for the same glory and happiness with themselves, grovelling like swine in dirt and mire; one priding itself in a gay suit, another hugging a bag of glistering earth, a third stewing and dissolving itself in luxury and voluptuousness, and all employed at that poor, and mean, and miserable rate, as might justly make these blessed spirits ashamed to own their kindred and alliance! To tell you truly and seriously my thoughts, I cannot imagine, but, if when we are thus extravagantly concerned about the pitiful trifles of this world, the blessed spirits do see and converse with us; it is a much more ludicrous and ridiculous sight in their eyes, to see us thus sillily concerned and employed, than it would be in us to

see a company of boys with mighty zeal and concern wrangling and crying, striving and scrambling for a bag of cherry-stones. Wherefore, in the name of God, sirs, let us not expose ourselves any longer to the just derision of the world, by our excessive dotage upon the trifling vanities of this life; but let us seriously consider, that we are all concerned in matters of much higher importance, even in the unspeakable felicity of an everlasting life.

3. Hence I infer how unreasonable it is for good men to be afraid of dying; since just on the other side the grave you see there is a state of endless bliss and happiness prepared to receive and entertain them: so that to them death is but a dark entry out of a wilderness of sorrow, into a paradise of eternal pleasure. And therefore, if it be an unreasonable thing for sick men to dread their recovery, for slaves to tremble at their jubilee, or for prisoners to quake at the news of a gaol-delivery; how much more unreasonable is it for good men to be afraid of death, which is but a momentary passage from sickness, labour, and confinement, to eternal health, and rest, and liberty! For God's sake consider, sirs; what is there in this world that you have reason to be fond of? what in the other that you need be afraid of? Suppose that now your souls were on the wing mounting upwards to the celestial abodes, and that at some convenient stand between heaven and earth, from whence you might take a prospect of both, you were now making a pause, to survey and compare them with one another; that having viewed over all the glories above, and tasted the beatifical joys, and heard the ravishing melodies of angels, you were now looking down again, with your minds filled with these

glorious ideas, upon this miserable world; and that all in a view you beheld the vast numbers of men and women that at this time are fainting for want of bread; of young men that are hewn down with the sword of war; of orphans that are weeping over their fathers' graves; of mariners that are shrieking in a storm, because their keel dashes against a rock, or bulges under them; of people that are groaning upon sick beds, or racked with agonies of conscience; that are weeping with want, mad with oppression, desperate by too quick a sense of a constant infelicity: would you not, do you think, upon such a review of both states, be infinitely glad that you are gone from hence, that you are out of the noise and participation of so many evils and calamities? would not the sight of the glories above, and the miseries beneath you, make you a thousand times more fearful of returning hither, than ever you were of going hence? Yes, doubtless it would. Why then should not our sense of the misery here, and our belief of the happiness there, produce the same effect in us, make us willing to remove our quarters, and exchange this wilderness for that Canaan?

It is true, indeed, the passage from one to the other is commonly very painful and grievous; but what of that? In other cases we are willing enough to endure a present pain, in order to a future ease; and if a few mortal pangs will work a perfect cure on me, and recover me into everlasting bliss and life, methinks the hope of this blessed effect should be sufficient to sweeten and endear that agony, and render it easy and desirable. But, alas! to die is to leave all our acquaintance, to bid adieu to our dearest friends and relations, to pass into an unknown

state, to converse with strangers, whose laws and customs we are not acquainted with: why now, all that looks sad in this is a very great mistake; for I verily hope, that I have more friends, and acquaintance, and relatives in heaven, than I shall leave behind me here on earth; and if so, I do but go from worse friends to better; for one friend there is worth a thousand here, in respect of all those endearing accomplishments that render a friend a jewel. But if I die a good man, I shall carry into eternity with me the genius and temper of a glorified spirit; and that will recommend me to the society of heaven, and render the spirits of those just men, whose names I never heard of, as dear friends to me in an instant, as if they had been my ancient cronies and acquaintance. But why should I grieve at parting with my friends below, when I shall go to the best friend I have in the world, to *God my Father*, to *Jesus my redeemer*, and to the *Holy Ghost my constant comforter and assistant?* And what though the state, and the laws, and customs of it be in a great measure unknown to me? yet what I know is infinitely desirable; from whence I may reasonably infer, that what I know not is so too; and if I have but the temper of heaven, I shall easily comply with the heavenly laws and customs of it. So that in the whole, I cannot imagine why any good man, that seriously believes the doctrine of a blessed immortality, and hath a just well-grounded hope of being made partaker of it at the expiration of this mortal life, should be so loath to leave this wretched world, and expire into that blessed eternity. I do not deny, but the circumstances of our affairs in this life are many times such as may justly excuse even a good

man's willingness to die: some great opportunities of doing good may present themselves, and invite him to stay a little longer; or his having begun his repentance late, or not having made a competent provision for his family, may for a time justify his unwillingness to depart, and render it both excusable and reasonable. But unless it be in these excepted cases, methinks I can hardly reconcile our hopes of happiness with our fear of death. For when I am verily persuaded that death is only a narrow stream, running between time and eternity, and I see my God and my Saviour with crowns of glory in their hands, beckoning to me from the farther shore, and calling to me to come over and receive those happy recompenses of my industry and labour; that I, like a naked timorous boy, should stand shivering on this bank of time, as if I were afraid to dip my foot in that cold stream of fate, which as soon as I am in I am past, and in the twinkling of an eye will land me on eternal bliss, is such an extravagant inconsistency, as (if I did not feel it in me) I should never believe I could be guilty of.

4. And lastly, Hence I infer, what a vast deal of reason we have to be diligent and industrious in religion, since God hath proposed such a vast reward to us, to encourage and animate our industry. How can we account any work hard, of which heaven is the wages? How can we faint in our Christian race, when we see the crown of glory hanging over the goal? Methinks this should be enough to infuse life and spirit into the most crest-fallen souls, to make cripples run, and to convert the most sneaking coward into a bold and magnanimous hero. For how much pains do we ordinarily take upon far less hopes? In

hope of a little transitory wealth, which we know we shall enjoy but a few years, and then part with for ever, we thrust ourselves into a perpetual crowd and tumult of business; where, with vast concern and thoughtfulness, with eager and passionate prosecutions, with endless brawls and contentions, with jostling and rencountering one another, we toil and weary ourselves, and make our lives a constant drudgery: and shall we flag when heaven is the object of our prosecutions, who are so active in the pursuit of trifles? Whensoever therefore we find our endeavours in religion begin to jade and droop, let us lift up our eyes to the crown of glory; and if we are capable of being moved by objects of the greatest value, that must infuse new vigour into us, and make us all life, and spirit, and wing. For what though my way lies up the hill, and leads me along through thorns and precipices, so that I am fain to sweat at every step, and every ascent is a toil to me; yet when I am up, I am sure to be entertained with such pleasant gales and glorious prospects, as will fully recompense all my toil in climbing thither. There, with an overjoyed heart, I shall sit down and bless my labours: blessed be you, my bitter agonies and sharp conflicts, my importunate prayers and wellspent tears; for now I am fully repaid for you all, and do reap ten thousand times more joys from you than ever I endured pains. For what are the pains of a moment to the pleasures of eternity? Wherefore hold out, my faith and patience, yet a little longer, and your work will soon be at an end; and after a few laborious weekdays, you shall keep an everlasting sabbath. What though my voyage lie through a stormy sea, yet it is to the Indies of

happiness; and a few leagues farther lies the blessed port, where I shall be crowned as soon as I am landed. Go on therefore, O my soul, with thy utmost courage and alacrity; for let the winds bluster, and the waves swell never so much, yet thou canst not miscarry, unless thou wilt. Thou art not, like other passengers, left to the mercy of wind and weather, but thy fate is in thy own hands, and if thou wilt but have *thy fruit unto holiness, thy end shall be everlasting life.*

DISCOURSE XXI.

UPON

1 JOHN IV. 19.

We love him, because he first loved us.

I HAVE shewed you in the former discourses how indispensably necessary it is that we should love God, in order to our being truly religious; and proved to you at large, that of all principles of religion whatsoever, this is the most operative and effectual. And then, to excite this heavenly affection in you, I have shewn you, that the goodness of God is the principal motive that engages our love to him. And now, that I may more largely explain the nature and measures of this love, as it is our duty, and engage you to it by this grand motive of the divine goodness, I have made choice of this text, *We love him, because he first loved us.*

The Greek word ἀγαπῶμεν here, may as well be rendered subjunctively, to signify what we ought to do, as indicatively, for what we already do: and indeed it seems more suitable to the context, to render it *we should*, or *ought* to love him, than *we love* him. For in the former verses the apostle earnestly presses Christians to love one another, upon the consideration of God's great love to them; and then consider, how naturally their love to one another would follow upon their mutual love to God: he concludes, that the most effectual course to oblige them to love one another was, to excite them to the love of God, upon the consideration of his great love to them. For, saith

he, verse 20. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar:* because light itself is not more inseparable to the sun, than brotherly love is to the love of God. So that, unless we render ἀγαπῶμεν αὐτὸν, *we should love him*, as we shall evacuate the necessity of the apostle's counsel, so we shall disturb the order and method of his argument. For if we render it indicatively, *we love him*, it will thence necessarily follow, that we shall also love one another, and so there would be no need of the apostle's counsel, and then the words will be wholly impertinent to the argument: which, as I have shewed, is to excite us to the love of God, and thereby to engage us to love one another: but what need he excite us to do that which he himself confesses we did already? If therefore we render the word subjunctively, as it seems most reasonable we should, this will be the sense of the text, *We are bound in duty to love God, because he first loved us.* According to which sense, here is,

First, A duty; We ought to love God.

Secondly, A reason of it; *Because he first loved us.*

I. I begin with the duty; We ought to love him. In handling of which I shall do these two things:

1. Shew you what it is to love God.

2. In what degrees and measures we are bound to love him. And in explaining what this love of God is, I shall shew you,

First, Wherein the being and essence of it consists.

Secondly, What are its essential characters and properties.

1. Wherein the being and essence of our love of God consists? To which I answer in general, that this love of God consists in a rational, fixed, affecting

delight and complacency in the divine goodness and perfections. But that we may the better understand the nature of this heavenly virtue, and more exactly distinguish it from those wretched counterfeits that commonly usurp its name, and are too too often mistaken for it, it will be necessary to explain the several terms whereof its definition is composed.

1. Therefore, I say, it is a delight and complacency.

2. It is a rational one.

3. A fixed.

4. An affecting one.

5. It is terminated on the divine goodness and perfections.

1. The love of God consists in delight and complacency. And indeed this is the proper act of love, as it is distinguished from all other passions. For we find by experience, that the first act of our minds, upon the apprehension of a lovely object, is delight and complacency in the view or contemplation of it: and when any amiable object presents itself to our sense, or to our minds or fancies, it causes our thoughts to pause and stay themselves a while upon it, till we have viewed it round about, and drawn its picture in our minds; and when we have done, the very first expression of our love to it is to be well pleased with the contemplation of it; and while we review it over and over, to be sweetly ravished and delighted with the charming prospect of its beauty. And from this prime and essential act of love arises all those consequent affections of hope, benevolence, and desire of fruition: for the reason why we wish well to, hope for, or desire to enjoy any object, is, because we are well pleased with it, and do find a sweet content and satisfaction in that

picture or idea of it which we have drawn upon our own minds. So that the very essence of love, you see, consists in a well-pleasedness, arising from the apprehended goodness and congruity of the thing beloved; and it is merely by accident that there is any other emotion intermingled with this grateful affection. For if it were not for the want of what we love, if there were no distance between us and the objects of our affection, our love would be all but one pure continued act of complacency and delight: for if all our needs were fully satisfied, we should love without either desire or hope, both which imply want and absence from the objects of our love: which is a plain evidence that complacency is the very essence of love, since there may be love without hope, or desire, or any other passion mingled with it; but without complacency there can be none. It is true, the degrees of love's complacencies are much greater in the fruition of its objects, than they are in the pursuit of them; but still it is of the same kind: for it is the delight we take in an object that makes us desire to enjoy it; but in the enjoyment, our desire expires into an higher degree of delight and satisfaction. For desire and delight are only the wings and arms of love; those for pursuits, and these for embraces: but it is the arms that give the wings both motion and rest; the delight we take in the objects of our love, that both inflames and quenches our desire. So that though in this indigent state hope and desire are inseparable to our love, yet that is by accident: but as for its essence and definition, it wholly consists of delight and complacency. And therefore if our love of God hath the common notion of love in it, as questionless

it hath, it must necessarily consist in our being well-pleased and delighted in the beauty, and goodness, and perfection of his nature. And accordingly we find in scripture, that our love to God, and God's love to us, is expressed by delighting in one another. So Prov. iii. 12. *For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth*, i. e. whom he loves. So also our love to God is expressed by delighting in him, Psalm xxxvii. 4. *Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

2. The love of God is a rational delight and complacency in him, by which it is distinguished from those sensible emotions of bodily passion which many times are nothing else but the natural effects of an overheated fancy. For I make no doubt but a man may be rapt even into an ecstasy of sensible delight and complacency in God; that is, upon an amiable representation of God, his spirits may be made to flow in a sweet and placid torrent to his heart; and by their nimble motions about it, to soothe and tickle it into a most sensible pleasure, till it opens and dilates its orifices, and the grateful flood breaks in and drowns it in delight and ravishment. And yet, in all this mighty storm and commotion of passion, there may not be the least spark of sincere love to God: for all this not only may be, but many times is nothing else but the mere mechanism and natural effect of a warm and vigorous fancy; which being flushed with such brisk and active spirits as are most apt to be figured into amorous phantasms and ideas, can with these, without any assistance from reason, raise great commotions of joy in the heart, especially where the temper is soft, and the passions easy to be

wrought upon. And of the truth of this the histories of the devotos of all religions will furnish us with sufficient experiments. For even among the Turkish and heathen saints, there are as notorious instances of these sweet incomes and manifestations as among our own; and the same sensitive complacencies, which ours too often mistake for the sealings and witness of the Spirit, they frequently experience in their communion with Mahomet, Bacchus, and Apollo. So that to conclude that we love God from those corporeal passions is very unsafe and dangerous; and we may almost as certainly judge of the hunger of our souls after righteousness by the hunger of our bodies after bread, as of the love of our souls to God by our bodily ravishments and passions. For bodily passion differs according to the temper of the body; some tempers are so soft and impressive, that the most frivolous fancy will affect them; others so hard and sturdy, that the greatest reason will hardly move them; and consequently persons of this temper, though they should love God much more than the other, and have a much higher esteem of, and more rational complacency in his divine perfections, yet will have much less of corporeal passion intermingled with it. I do not deny but even this sensitive passion, when prudently managed, may be of great advantage to a rational love: for the passions being soft and easy, and apt to follow the motions of the soul, do naturally intend and quicken them, and render them more vigorous and active, and we have very much cause to bless God even for that sensitive joy and complacency which accompanies our love to him; since this, I doubt not, is many times excited by his own blessed Spirit, to quicken

and invigorate our rational affection, and render it more active and vivacious. But that which I aim at is only this, if possible, to beat men off from measuring the strength or weakness, the truth or falsehood, of their love to God by any corporeal passion whatsoever; since men may, we see, and many times have a vehement passion without any reason; and all those ticklings and ravishments of heart, which too many men mistake for the love of God, are very often nothing else but the necessary effects of a chafed and overheated fancy. But that which is really the love of God is always founded in a rational conviction of the beauty and goodness of his nature, and proceeds from an high esteem and profound veneration of his perfections. For no man loves God but can give very good reason why he loves him: he is not moved to it by a musical tone, or a gaudy metaphor, or an unaccountable impulse of fancy; but by the real charms and attractions of the divine goodness and perfection; which darting through his mind, like the sunbeams through a burning-glass, have kindled his affections, and made him love with infinite reason: so that it is his understanding that enamours his will; and that which makes him a lover of God, is the deep sense of his reason how much he deserves to be beloved. He hath seriously considered how lovely God is in himself, how kind and loving unto all his creation, and what particular obligation God hath laid upon him to return him love for love; and this gives fire to his love, and affects his will with delight and complacency: and though perhaps he may not feel those passionate soothings and expansions of heart which sensitive joy is wont to produce; yet he finds himself highly

pleased with God, and his will acquiesces in the thought of his goodness and perfections with a calm and even complacency: and thus his will is inflamed with the purest light of his understanding, and his love is nothing else but the warm reflection of his reason. Thus, Psalm cxvi. 1. *I love the Lord*, saith David; and then he goes on to enumerate the vast and important reasons why he loved him; *because he hath inclined his ear*, &c. and in 1 Cor. viii. 3. *If any man love God, the same*, i. e. God, *is known of him;* intimating, that all true love of God is founded in the knowledge of him.

3. The love of God is a fixed as well as rational complacency in him; by which I distinguish this heavenly affection from those short and transitory fits of love, that, like flashes of lightning, come and go, appear and vanish, in a moment. For thus, upon some affecting providence, or passionate representation of the divine goodness, it is very ordinary for men to be chafed into an amorous fit, and touched with very tender resentments of the loveliness and love of God; so that at present they seem to be in raptures of affection, and, with the Spouse in the Canticles, to be wondrous sick of love; but, alas! it commonly proves but a sudden qualm, that after a pang or two goes over, and so they are well again immediately: for upon their next encounter with temptation, or intermixture with secular affairs, their hot love begins to languish, and quickly dies into a cold indifferency; and notwithstanding all the reasons and obligations that they have to the contrary, their fickle hearts unwind again, and by degrees decline and sink into their old habitual aversation to God and goodness; which is a plain evidence that

that which at first looked like the love of God in them, was only a sudden blush of passion, and not the true complexion of their souls. For when once a man is brought to love God upon principles of reason and consideration, it is much more difficult to extinguish this, than any virtue whatsoever; because of all the virtues of religion, this is founded in the greatest reason, and accompanied with the strongest pleasure. For love itself consisting in delight and complacency, where the object of it is an infinite good, there is not only infinite reason to love, but infinite occasion of pleasure and complacency. When therefore our love of God is backed with so much reason, and sweetened with so much pleasure; how is it possible we should extinguish it without doing the greatest violence to ourselves? For I am verily persuaded, that one of the hardest moral changes that can be made upon a rational creature, is from a lover to become an enemy to God; for wheresoever this heavenly affection is, it sweetens and endears itself by its own appendant pleasures, which are in themselves a sufficient countercharm against all temptations to the contrary. So that when once it is kindled in the soul, like a subtile flame, it will by degrees insinuate farther and farther, till it hath eaten into the centre of the soul, and turned it all into its own substance. Wherefore this we may certainly conclude upon, that he who can suddenly or easily entertain an aversation to God and goodness, did never truly love: *For love*, saith the Wise Man, *is strong as death; and many waters cannot quench it*, Cant. viii. 6, 7. wheresoever it lights it clings, and can never be torn away again without violent spasms and convulsions. So that whatsoever passion we

may have for God, we can never conclude it to be hearty love, till it fixes and settles in our souls; till our wills are habitually pleased with God, and do entertain the thoughts of his love and loveliness with a constant complacency and delight; and then we may venture to call it love, and to rejoice in the nativity of this heavenly flame within us.

4. It is an affecting delight and complacency in God; by which I distinguish it from a mere liking and naked approbation. For God is a being so infinitely amiable and benevolent, that it is impossible almost for any reasonable creature to know him, and not like and approve of him. But though in all approbation there is some degree of complacency, yet there is no doubt but a man may approve of what he doth not love; and there is no doubt but there are many men that do approve of God as the most glorious and excellent of beings, and the most worthy of love and veneration, who yet have not one spark of real love towards him. For thus St. Paul, we find, when he was a Jew in religion, approved of the law as *holy, and just, and good;* Rom. vii. 12. and that in this approbation of his there was some degree of complacency and delight: *for*, saith he, *I delight in the law of God according to the inward man*, verse 22. but all this while he was very far from having any real love and affection for it: for in the next verse he tells us, that he had a *law in his members warring against the law of his mind;* that is, he had an inward repugnancy and aversation against this excellent law, which his reason did approve of as *holy, and just, and good;* and no degree of true love could consist with such an aversation. And there is no doubt but most men

who have right conceptions of God, do in their mind and reason as much approve of and delight in the perfection of his nature, as St. Paul did in the perfection of his law; and yet their wills are as repugnant and averse to the holiness and purity of the one, as St. Paul's then was to the justice and goodness of the other. Wherefore, to constitute us true lovers of God, it is necessary that our approbation of, and delight and complacency in him, should be such as doth powerfully affect our wills, and reconcile them to the nature of God. For whilst our wills are averse to that immaculate purity and goodness which is so inseparable to his nature, it is impossible we should heartily love him; and though in our minds we may approve of him as a most glorious and excellent being, yet in our hearts we shall still retain a secret antipathy against him. And I doubt not but the devils themselves do so far approve of God, as to acknowledge him altogether amiable and lovely: for if they do not, I am sure they are very shallow spectators; but yet we see this approbation of theirs accompanied with an inveterate rancour and enmity against him. And till our wills are so affected by our reason, as to consent and echo to its approbations, to take complacency in that divine purity which our reason acknowledges to be the crown and ornament of God; whilst we reverence him in our minds, we hate and despise him in our affections. So that he only is a lover of God whose will is reconciled to true goodness.

5. And lastly, This love must be terminated on the proper goodness and perfections of God; and hereby I distinguish it from that love which we too commonly terminate upon a god of our own making.

For it is very ordinary with men to set up idols and false representations of God in their minds, and then fall down and worship them: and it is no great wonder, if they are extremely fond of these idol-divinities of their own making, since commonly they are nothing else but the pictures and images of themselves. *Thou thoughtest*, saith God to those profligate persons, *that I was such a one as thyself*, Psalm l. 21. Men have always been prone to cast all their ideas of God in the mould of their own tempers, and to fashion the divinity whom they worship according to the model of their own inclinations. Thus men of ungovernable and imperious tempers are apt to represent God in their own likeness, a being that governs himself and others by a mere blind omnipotent self-will, that wills things merely because he wills them, and is no way concerned to regulate his own motions by any antecedent rules of justice, wisdom, or goodness. So also men of wrathful and revengeful tempers are apt to look upon God as a froward, furious, and implacable being; that is, to be pleased or displeased with trifles; that frowns or smiles as the humour takes him; that when the froward fit is upon him, breathes nothing but revenge and fury, and whose love and hatred is fickle and mutable, and never constant to the same reasons. And to name no more, thus men of fond and indulgent natures are apt to represent God to themselves, as one that dotes invincibly on those who have once the luck to be his favourites; and in Christ, at least, will hug their very deformities, and connive at their greatest treasons and rebellions. And since these false representations that men make of God are nothing but the reflections of their own images, in loving him they only

love themselves; and it is no wonder that they are more devoutly affected towards such an imaginary divinity, than towards the true God himself clothed with his own attributes, and circled about with his own rays of unstained and immaculate glory; since the former is nothing but their own shadow, which, Narcissus like, they gaze upon and fall in love with. But whatsoever love we may bestow upon these false representations, it is not terminated upon God; but on the spectres and images of our fancies, which have nothing of God about them but the name. Wherefore, to constitute our love truly divine, it is necessary that it should respect God as he is in himself, and not as he seems to be in those disfigured idols of our own fancies. We must blot out of our minds all these false conceptions, which, like the Æthiopian idols, are nothing but our own resemblance, and portrait him in all those fair ideas wherein he hath represented himself unto us; and when we have righted him in our own opinions, and formed such notions of him as are agreeable to his native perfections, then we must love him for what we see in him, even for the mercy and goodness, the righteousness and purity of his nature. For unless we love these his moral perfections, which are indeed the only objects of love in him, all our kind pretences are base flatteries, and, instead of him, we only love a mock-god of our own making. And thus I have shewed you at large wherein the essence of this heavenly virtue, our love of God, consists. But because things are better understood by their essential characters and properties than by their naked essences, and we may much more easily discern whether we truly love God or no by the former than by the latter,

2. I proceed in the next place to shew you what are the essential properties and characters of our love of God: and these are to be fetched from the nature of love in general; the properties whereof, when it is determined on a person, are chiefly these four:

1. Benevolence to the person beloved.
2. Desire of enjoying him.
3. Imitation of his perfections.
4. Conformity to his will.

1. Benevolence is an essential property of our love of God: by which, I do not mean wishing of any additional good or happiness to God, which yet he wants; for that is extravagance, to wish that a being who is infinitely happy should be more happy than he is; since his happiness would not be infinite, if it could admit of addition or increase. By our benevolence to God therefore, I only mean our hearty desire that he may be pleased by ourselves and others; that all his creation may conspire to serve and glorify him in that method which he hath prescribed; and that his will may be done upon earth as it is in heaven. And this must necessarily be the hearty wish of every sincere lover of God: and when he sees himself defeated of his wish, by the wicked lives and manners of men; when he considers how God is offended every day, how his authority is affronted, his laws trampled on, his name vilified and blasphemed, by bold and insolent sinners, he cannot forbear grieving at it, to see him his soul loves loaded with so many indignities and dishonours. For thus did David, that great lover of God; *Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law,* Psalm cxix. 136. So that what the brave

Portia said to her dear Brutus, κοίνονος εἰμ' ἀγαθῶν, κοίνονος τε ἀναιρῶν, that can every lover of God say, "Lord! thou knowest that I sympathize in all thy "pleasures and displeasures; when thou art pleased "I rejoice, and when thou art offended I am "grieved."

2. Another property of divine love is, an earnest desire of enjoying God. For so when we love a friend, we desire to enjoy as much of him as we are able; that is, we would fain be more intimately acquainted with him, we would love him more, and be more beloved by him, and resemble him in all those amiable qualities for which we love and admire him. And thus, if we have chosen God for our friend, we shall still be breathing after a more intimate fruition of him; our thoughts will be often employed in the contemplation of his beauty and glory, and our minds will be perpetually longing after a clearer knowledge of, and more intimate acquaintance with him. We shall never think we love him sufficiently, and never think we can do enough to endear ourselves to his favour; but shall always feel in ourselves, both want of love to him, and want of desert to be beloved by him. We shall incessantly covet more and more to resemble him in those adorable perfections for which we love him; that so, if it were possible, he might have the same reason to love us as we have to love him. We shall earnestly hunger and thirst after righteousness, and vehemently wish that all those amiable characters of purity and justice, mercy and goodness, for which we do admire and love him, were more fairly imprinted on our own natures; that so, by partaking of these perfections, we may grow more and more god-

like, till we are arrived to a most perfect resemblance and conformity of natures with him. Thus to enjoy God must needs be the desire of every true and hearty lover of him. And indeed this is the only enjoyment we are capable of; for we cannot enjoy God's essence, because we cannot possess it, it being neither communicated nor communicable; and therefore all that our enjoyment of him can include is, to know, and love, and be beloved by him; and to resemble him in those charming beauties of purity and goodness, which render him so infinitely lovely: and it is essential to every faithful lover of him thus to desire to enjoy him.

3. Imitation of his perfections is another essential property of love to him: and this is necessarily consequent to the former: for if we love God, it is either for the good he doth us, or for the beauty and loveliness of his nature. If we love him for the good he doth us, we must needs be sensible that it is a lovely thing to do good, and this must strangely incline us to imitate him in doing all the good we are able. If we love him for the beauty and excellency of his nature, we cannot but desire to be like him; because whatsoever we esteem lovely in another, we desire to partake of, out of love to ourselves; and if we desire to partake of what is lovely in another, that must needs engage us to imitate him, since we have no other way to partake of another's excellencies, but only by a constant imitation of them. So that it is impossible we should love God for the beauty and perfection of his nature, and not heartily desire to partake of it; and it is impossible we should heartily desire to partake of it, and not endeavour to transcribe it by a constant and vigorous imi-

tation. So that whatsoever good reason we love God for, it must necessarily terminate in our imitation of those amiable actions or perfections for which we love him: and therefore for any man to pretend to love God, while he acts contrary to the reasons for which he loves him, is plainly to contradict himself, and baffle his own pretensions. For to say that I love God for doing good, or for being just, holy, and benevolent, while I take no care to do good myself, but take pleasure in impurity, injustice, or uncharitableness, is to say that I love him for those things which I declare I do not love. If therefore we heartily love God, as we pretend to do, it will be visible in our imitation of him; for unless we endeavour to be pure as he is pure, and holy as he is holy, and just and merciful as he is just and merciful, all our pretensions of love to him are cheats and fulsome hypocrisy.

4. And lastly, Compliance with the will of God is another essential character and property of our love to him. For if we sincerely love a person, we must needs desire to please him, that so thereby we may endear ourselves to him; and if we really desire to please him, to be sure we shall readily comply with his will in whatsoever is just and reasonable. And hence the scripture makes our obedience to the will of God essential to our love of him: *For this*, saith St. John, *is the love of God, that we keep his commandments*, 1 John v. 3. *And this is love, that we walk after his commandments*, 2 Epist. 6. *If ye love me*, saith our Saviour, *keep my commandments*, John xiv. 15. that is, give me this token that ye love me; for without this, I can never believe that you have any real kindness for me, whatsoever preten-

sions you may make: for so, verse 23. he adds, *If any man love me, he will keep my commandments;* intimating, that between our love of and obedience to him, there is a necessary and inseparable connection. So that we may as soon be men without risibility, as lovers of God without sincere submission to his will. For lovers have one will and one soul; they conspire in the same designs, and drive at the same interests; their affections are perfect unisons, and do in the same likes and dislikes resound and echo to one another; and so far as they love, there is such a perfect agreement between them, that they seem mutually to lend and borrow wills and souls with one another. And so, if we love God, there will be a sweet harmony between our wills and his, at least so far as we love him: for if we love him, we shall love to please him, by complying in all things with his heavenly will, and rejoice that we are able to do any thing that we are sure will be acceptable in his eyes, and certainly endear us to his most tender affection. Whilst therefore we live in wilful disobedience and opposition to his heavenly will, all our pretences of love to him are rank dissimulations, and, like the kisses of Judas, are only prefaces to succeeding treasons and rebellions. And thus you see wherein the essence of our love to God consists, and what are its essential properties: by a serious review of which, you may easily conclude whether in reality you are lovers of God or no.

2. I now proceed to the next inquiry, namely, what measures and degrees of this love are matter of indispensable duty to us. For answer to which we must consider, that this, as well as the other virtues of Christianity, are required of us by a twofold law;

the first is the law of perfection, the second is the law of sincerity: both of which it will be necessary to explain, before we can exactly determine what degrees and measures of love to God are matter of indispensable duty.

1. First therefore, there is the law of perfection, which requires the utmost degrees of every Christian virtue, that in the several states and periods of our lives we are capable of attaining. For thus we are enjoined not only *to do*, but *to abound in the work of the Lord*; not only to *have grace*, but to *grow in it*; to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*; and *be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect*. And indeed the nature of God is the only standard of that perfection whereunto we must aspire, and we are still bound to be growing on, till we are infinitely holy: which, because our finite natures can never arrive to in any period of duration, therefore I doubt not but it will be our duty to be growing on eternally. So that this law having prescribed no limits to the degrees of our growth in virtue, hath thereby cut out work enough to employ our faculties for ever. Not that we are sinners against this law so long as we are short or defective of the utmost degree of perfection; for it requires of us no more than what is within our present possibility, and our possibility increases together with our improvements. When we have but one single degree of virtue, it is no sin against the law of perfection that we do not immediately leap to six or seven, because it is not in our power; and no law can oblige a man to that which is impossible: but when we have acquired one degree, we have power to acquire a second; and when we have acquired that, we have power to acquire a

third, and so on *ad infinitum:* and consequently our obligation to be more and more perfect increases according to the improvement of our power. A babe in Christ, or beginner in religion, hath not the strength and power of a man; that is, of one that hath made a considerable progress; and consequently he is not immediately obliged by this law to the same degree of growth and perfection: but whatsoever degree is within his power, in the different periods of his growth and progress, that he is actually and immediately obliged to; and while he continues defective in it, he sins against the law of perfection. So that, in short, this law requires us to be in all respects as good, in the several stages of our Christian progress, as at present it is possible for us to be; and so far as we fall short of any attainment that is within our power, we are guilty of violating its righteous obligation. It is true, this law doth not oblige us under the pain of eternal damnation; and indeed if it did, no flesh could be saved, since there never was any mere man but might have possibly been better than he was, had he been so diligent as to improve himself to the utmost degree of his power. The proper sanction therefore of this law is this; that we should actually do all the good, and acquire all the degrees of virtue that are at present within our power, under the pain of losing some degree of happiness in the other world, which otherwise we should have attained; which is no more than what naturally follows upon all sinful defects. For every sinful defect is a privation of some degree of goodness; and goodness is so essential to happiness, that there cannot be a privation of the one, without a diminution of the other. But besides those defects of happiness that are naturally

consequent to our defects of virtue, the scripture plainly assures us, that God himself will substract from our reward hereafter, in proportion to our moral defects and non-improvements in this life; for, *He which soweth sparingly*, saith the apostle, *shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully*, 2 Cor. ix. 6. And Luke xix. our Saviour, by way of a parable, doth expressly teach us, that our reward shall be apportioned to the degrees of our improvement: for there he represents himself as a master coming to take account of his servants, among whom he had intrusted a stock of ten pounds, giving every one of them an equal share: the first, by an extraordinary diligence, had impoved his pound into ten, and he is rewarded accordingly with the government of ten cities, ver. 16, 17. The other had been faithful, though not altogether so diligent, and by his one pound had gained five, and proportionably is made lord of five cities, ver. 18, 19. By which he plainly declares, that so much as we come short of the utmost improvement in virtue, so much will he substract from the utmost degree of our reward. So that, in short, the sense of the law of perfection is this; As thou wouldest not incur the forfeiture of some degrees of thy happiness in the other life, be sure to employ thy utmost diligence in improving thyself in every grace and virtue of religion. But then,

2. There is the law of sincerity, which only requires the being and reality of all Christian graces and virtues in us, together with the proper acts and exercises of them, according as we have opportunity; and doth no farther forbid the deficiency and non-

improvement of them, than as it is gross, and continued, and inconsistent with sincerity. Now the reality of these Christian virtues in us consists in the universal and prevalent consent of our wills to them, to practise them as often as occasion requires, and not wilfully to commit any contrary sin upon any occasion whatsoever: and so long as this consent continues and prevails in our practice, we are just in the eye and judgment of the law, whatsoever weakness and defects, surprises and inadvertencies, we may otherwise be guilty of. For he who hath so submitted his will to God, as to consent effectually without any reserve to obey him, is evidently cordial and sincere, though perhaps he may be weak and imperfect. For as he is sincerely chaste, whose will doth prevalently consent to the law of chastity; so he is universally a virtuous man, whose will doth prevalently consent to the universal law of virtue; because that very consent of his includes the being and reality of all virtues, though not the utmost degrees and improvements of them. This therefore is the utmost that the law of sincerity requires, that we should universally and prevalently consent to the will of God, so as not wilfully to neglect any duty which he hath enjoined, and practise any sin which he hath forbid: but though this be all it requires, yet this it exacts under the severest penalty in the world, even that of eternal death and condemnation; only this proviso it admits of, that if we do repent and amend, this dreadful obligation shall be null and void. So that the great difference between the law of perfection and the law of sincerity is only this, that the penalty of the latter is much more severe than that of the former; but the duty of the former

is much more large and comprehensive than that of the latter.

Having thus briefly explained to you these two different laws by which the love of God, as well as all other virtues, are made our duty; this, I conceive, will be of very great use in stating the due bounds and measures either of love or any other virtue God requires of us: we must understand by what laws it is that he requires it, and what measures of it those laws do require. First, therefore, we will consider, what degree of love to God is required by the law of perfection. Secondly, what degree of it is required by the law of sincerity.

1. What degree of love to God is required by the law of perfection? To which I answer, that it requires all that love which in the several periods of our growth and progress in religion we are able to render him. For it is to be considered, that in this corrupt estate both our understandings and wills are so darkened and depraved, that we do not apprehend the thousandth part of those degrees of loveliness that are in him; and if we did, yet our affections are so inveigled by these sensual goods among which we are placed, that we are not able to render him a thousandth part of that love which those degrees of loveliness we do apprehend in him do deserve. But there is no just law can exact of us beyond what we are able to perform; and therefore this law of perfection being just and righteous, cannot be supposed to exact more love to God from us, than we have strength and power (all our circumstances considered) to render unto him. So that he who doth his utmost to understand and affect himself with the beauty and loveliness of God, and to sub-

stract his love from sensual good, and terminate it on God, is a just and innocent man in the judgment of the law of perfection. From whence it is evident, first, That no man can be bound by any law to love God as much as he deserves to be beloved; because he being infinitely lovely in himself, is the adequate object of an infinite love, which no finite being is capable of. Secondly, That no man is bound to understand how much he deserves to be beloved; because this is beyond the comprehension of any finite understanding, especially of ours, which are so dim-sighted in their apprehensions of spiritual and invisible beings. Thirdly, That in this state no man is bound actually to love God so far as he apprehends reason to love him: this indeed we ought to endeavour after; but while we continue in these bodies, it is impossible for us so absolutely to abstract our love from sense and sensual things, as not to be in the least diverted by it from loving him to that degree in which we know he deserves to be beloved. It is, I confess, our imperfection, that our love to him is not proportionate to our apprehensions of his loveliness: but besides this, we have many other imperfections, that are our misery indeed, but not our sin. For no imperfection is any farther our sin, than it is in our power to correct it; and there is no true lover of God did ever attain to that degree of love, as not to see great reason to wish that it were in his power still to love him more: which is a plain evidence, in every period of this imperfect state, that our affections are so entangled by these sensible goods about us, that we are not able to raise them to such a degree of love as is proportionate to our apprehensions of his loveliness. Fourthly and lastly, That no man is

bound to love God, in the several periods of his growth and progress in religion, with the same degree of affection: for by the law of perfection a man is always bound to love him as much as he can; but in the progress of our religion we can love him much more than in the beginning. For the more we know of God, and the more our affections are disengaged from these sensual goods, the more power and ability we have to love him; and we are equally bound to love him as much as we can, when we have ten degrees of power, as we are when we have but one; and consequently it is as great an offence against the law of perfection not to love him as much as we can, when we have more power to love him, as it was when we had less. So that by this law we are always bound to love him as much as we are able; and to be always augmenting our ability of loving him, and always to love him more and more, as our power and ability increases; and under this sweet obligation perhaps we shall lie to all eternity. For there being infinite degrees of loveliness and amability in God, our finite understandings will need an infinity of duration to discover them all; and it would be unreasonable for us not to love him more, according as we discover more of the beauty and loveliness of his nature. It is true, in this life the difficulty lies not so much in discovering his loveliness, as in affecting our hearts with the sense of it, and in raising our gross and carnal affections to a love proportionate to those discoveries; and it is this that creates us so much toil and labour in the progress of our obedience to the law of perfection: but when once we are arrived to the blessed regions of immortality, our affection being perfectly subdued to

the reason of our minds, and drained and clarified from all its gross and carnal love, will as naturally flame out more and more towards God, upon every new discovery of his beauty, as fire doth when more combustible fuel is laid upon it; and so, without any toil or difficulty, the more we know, the more we shall love, and so more and more for ever. If therefore we would know what measures of love to God we are obliged to by this law of perfection, the answer is easy, viz. That to all eternity we are bound to love him as much as we are able, and always to love him more and more as our ability increases. And this I take to be the sense of that comprehensive law of our Saviour, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength*, Mark xii. 30. that is, Thou shalt employ thy faculties, thy mind, thy will, and thy affections, to the utmost of thy strength and power, in loving, delighting, and taking complacency in the goodness, beauty, and perfections of God. But,

2. What degree of love to God is required by the law of sincerity, which is the law by which we must stand or fall for ever? So that the sense of the inquiry is this, What degree of love to God is necessary to put us into a state of salvation, the indispensable condition of our salvation being nothing else but our obedience to this law of sincerity. Now, as to this particular of our love of God, there are two things which this law exacts of us: first, It requires the being and existence of this heavenly virtue in us; that is, it requires not only that we should not hate God, or be indifferent between love and hatred, in our affection to him; but that we should really, cor-

dially, and sincerely love him. And hence those eternal glories and beatitudes in which our salvation doth consist are said to be *prepared by God for them that love him*, 1 Cor. ii. 9. which is a plain evidence that it is one of the conditions or qualifications upon which our salvation doth depend, and consequently an indispensable duty of the law of sincerity; and St. James expressly tells us, *that the Lord hath promised the crown of life to them that love him*, James i. 12. And therefore, since that law of sincerity contains the condition of that promise, it hence necessarily follows, that our love to God is a part of it, since that promise is made to those that love him. Nay, so necessary a part of that law is this excellent virtue, that the apostle tells us, without this the most virtuous actions whatsoever are insignificant ciphers in the account of God: for *though*, saith he, *I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing*, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. where it is plain he takes charity in the largest sense, for our love to God and one another. He therefore that doth not really love God, who is not heartily touched and affected with the sense of his goodness and perfection, stands condemned by the law of sincerity; and without repentance and amendment, shall have no part or portion in the kingdom of God. But then,

Secondly, This law of sincerity requires such a degree of love to God, as doth, together with the other motives of Christianity, effectually render us obedient to his will. For as I have shewed you, the scripture every where makes our keeping his commandments the most essential property of our love

to him: for *if a man love me*, saith our Saviour, *he will keep my words*, John xiv. 23. And, *Whoso keepeth his word*, saith St. John, that is, his commandments, *in him is the love of God perfected*: that is, in him it is real, and cordial, and sincere, 1 John ii. 5. When therefore our love to God hath that power over us, as, together with the other motives of Christianity, to restrain us from the wilful omission of any known duty, or commission of any known sin, it is then perfected to that degree which the law of sincerity exacts. But before we dismiss this argument, it will be necessary to give a more particular account of it.

1. Therefore this law of sincerity requires, that some degree of true love to God should be intermingled with the other parts of our obedience to him; because this, as I have shewn you, is one great and essential part of that obedience which it requires: and therefore if, out of a mere fear of God, we should obey him in all other instances, yet, so long as we are defective in this, our obedience will be lame and partial, and want a great part of that entireness which the law of sincerity exacts. For since it requires us to love God under the same penalty of eternal death, that it requires all its other duties, we can no more be saved by it without this virtue, than without justice, temperance, and chastity: yea, considering how necessary this is, both to quicken our obedience here, and to qualify us for happiness hereafter, we may much better spare any virtue of religion, than this of the love of God. This therefore is indispensably necessary, according to the tenor of the law of sincerity, that there should be some degree of

true love to God intermingled with the other parts of our obedience.

2. This law of sincerity exacts of us only such a degree of love to God, as, in conjunction with the other motives of Christianity, is actually sufficient to enforce our obedience. It doth not require us to love God in that heroic degree, as not to need any other motive to engage us to obey his will: for if it did, no man could be in a good state, till he were able to obey God purely for his own sake, without any respect either to those glorious advantages he promises, or those endless torments he denounces; which requires such an ardent degree of love to him, as I doubt few good men arrive to in this life. I know it is usually said by those that handle this argument, that to love God above all things is the degree of love to which the law of sincerity obliges us: but either this must be a mistake, or no man can be good till he is so perfect a lover of God, as not to need any other motive but that of his own love to oblige him to obedience. For men need no motives to persuade them to choose what they love best; and therefore if men love God above all, they would need no farther motives to persuade them to choose what he wills and commands, against all persuasions to the contrary. If I love God above myself, I shall certainly choose his will before my own: if I love him above all my pleasures, I shall choose his pleasures before my own; and it will be a needless thing to propose motives to persuade me to do what I like best, and choose that which I love above all the world. So that whilst a man hath need of motives to persuade him to choose God, and prefer his will

above all temptations, it is apparent he loves him not above all; and consequently, according to this doctrine, cannot be a good man in the judgment of the law of sincerity; which if it were true, I doubt, the list of good men would be reduced to a very small number. Wherefore, since loving God above all is a high strain of piety, much above the low estate of sincere and true goodness, to make it necessary to a good state must needs be very dangerous; since it cannot but dishearten beginners in religion, and perplex their consciences with needless and inextricable scruples. I confess, not to love God above all, who doth so exceed all in degrees of loveliness and amability, is an argument of great imperfection, though not of insincerity: but if my love to him be such, as that, together with my hope and fear, excited by the other motives of religion, it effectually operates on my will, so as to win it to an universal prevalent consent to the will of God, I know no reason I have to judge severely of my main state, though I should be conscious to myself that my love, singly and apart from those other motives, had not force enough in it to produce this happy effect. This therefore, I conceive, is the utmost degree of love to God that the law of sincerity exacts, that we should so love him, as by our love, in concurrence with the other arguments of religion, to be effectually prevailed on to obey him.

3. The law of sincerity exacts such a degree of love of us as, together with those other motives of Christianity, is prevalent to sincere obedience; and in this it differs from the law of perfection, which requires such a degree of love of us as, together with those other motives, is productive of perfect unsinning

obedience. For, as I have shewed you, the law of perfection requires the utmost of our possibility; and consequently, that we should love God as much as we can; and consider and apply to ourselves the other motives of religion as well and as closely as we are able; and then proceed upon the whole to serve and obey God to the utmost of our power and ability; which if we do, we are perfectly innocent and inculpable; unless you suppose that a man may be blameworthy for not doing more than he can. But should the law of sincerity exact thus much of us, I doubt it would exclude the best of men out of the state of goodness and salvation: for what man is there that doth always love and obey God to the utmost of his present possibility? Wherefore, all that this law can be supposed to require of us, is only such a degree of love as is requisite to render it a concurrent cause of true sincere obedience; that is to say, such a love, as in concurrence with those great motives of reward and punishment, produces such an hearty consent in us to the will of God, as will not suffer us any longer to persist either in careless or affected ignorance of it, or in known and wilful disobedience to it: and there are no infirmities or miscarriages whatsoever inconsistent with such a degree of love to God, but what are also inconsistent with such a consent to his heavenly will. If therefore we thus love God to the purposes of a sincere obedience, the law of sincerity acquits us; and as for our sins of infirmity, surprise, or inadvertency, we are accountable for them only to the law of perfection.

4. And lastly, The law of sincerity requires such a degree of love to God as, together with those other

motives, makes us not only sincere in our obedience, but also careful to improve it to further degrees of perfection. And indeed this is necessarily included in the former: for if our love of God, joined with the other arguments of religion, hath so far prevailed upon us as to win us to a sincere consent to his heavenly will, we shall not only industriously avoid the known and wilful violations of it, but be very careful to correct those flaws and imperfections that are intermixed with our obedience to it. It is true, when there is nothing but slavish fear at the bottom of a man's obedience, that must necessarily contract and shrink up the sinews of his care and endeavours, and render him exceeding narrow and stingy in the discharge of his duty: for having no farther aim than his own security, he will do no more than what is necessary to avoid the danger that he stands in fear of: and if he can but escape those known and wilful sins that laid waste his conscience, and exposed him to the wrath of God, that is the utmost he desires or aims at: but as for those miscarriages and sinful imperfections, which do only fall under the cognizance of the law of perfection, he is not at all concerned about them. But when our fear is intermingled with such a degree of love to God, as the law of sincerity exacts, that will make us careful not only to avoid those known and wilful sins that divorce us from the favour of God, but also to endear ourselves more and more to him, by correcting even those smaller defects and imperfections that do still adhere to our duties and natures: for this is plain, that no man can heartily love God, that doth not more and more desire to be beloved by him; and

that no man can sincerely desire to be more and more beloved by God, that doth not honestly endeavour to render himself more and more lovely in his eyes; that is, to reform all those sinful defects and imperfections which stain and blemish the beauty of his soul. Whosoever therefore contents himself with this, not to be hated by God, did never sincerely love him; and whosoever desires more than this, will as well be careful to correct those smaller imperfections which render him less beloved of God, as to avoid those known and wilful sins which do expose him to God's hatred. If therefore our religion doth not in some measure improve our natures, if it doth not render us more patient and humble, more charitable and heavenly-minded, it is a certain sign that it is not acted by love. For if, after having a long while continued in a round of religious duties, we still return to the same point, and are in no degree better than we were when we first began, it is a plain token that we do not heartily desire to be more beloved of God, and consequently, that we do not love him. So that, in fine, the sum of all is this: The law of perfection requires us to love God with all our might and with all our strength; that is, as much as we are able, in every period of our growth and progress in religion; and by how much we love him less than we are able, by so much less shall be the future reward of our love. But then for the law of sincerity, that only requires of us such a degree of love to him, as doth, together with the other motives of religion, effectually incline us to obey him sincerely, and to endeavour to improve our obedience into farther degrees of perfection; and so long as we fall short of this,

we are bad men, and the wrath of God abides upon us. And so I have done with the first part of the text, We should or ought to love God.

II. I proceed now to the second part, viz. the reason why we ought to love him; and that is, because *he first loved us:* which, though it be but short in words, yet is extremely comprehensive in sense; containing in it such puissant motives and endearing obligations as cannot but affect us, if we have any spark of tenderness or ingenuity remaining in us. For in this argument or reason these six things are implied:

1. That he began in love to us.

2. That he began before we could any way deserve it.

3. That he began to love us when we deserved his hatred.

4. That he began when he foresaw he could never make an advantage by it.

5. He began to love us to such a degree, as to think nothing too dear or too good for us.

6. That he so began to love us, as to condescend, by all the arts of importunity, to court us to accept his love. All which are very powerful considerations to engage us to return him love for love.

1. He began in love to us. Had he only engaged himself to relove us whensoever we began to love him, and in the mean time remained indifferent in his affection towards us, this would have been a mighty endearing obligation. For the great Majesty of heaven to take notice of the loves of such poor worms as we, and, much more, to engage himself to repay them with a correspondent affection, is in itself a noble expression of his great and generous

goodness: but that he should not only take notice of, and return our love, but forestall and anticipate it; that he should condescend to make the first address and tender of love to us, is such an expansion of goodness as is sufficient to inflame the most stupid and insensible soul. For he that loves another lays an obligation upon him, and renders him extremely beholding; he lends him his heart and soul, which are much more valuable than money; and he becomes his creditor, and acquires a just claim to be repaid with mutual affection: for not to repay love for love, is equally unjust and ungrateful. He therefore that begins to love, doth thereby render the person beloved his debtor, and acquires a just right to be beloved by him again, though he should have no other pretence to or interest in his affections; especially if he be one who is much our superior in all endearing perfections and accomplishments; because this must needs render his love more valuable, and consequently augment our obligation to relove him.

When therefore the great God himself shall begin to love us, who doth so infinitely excel us in all manner of amiable perfections, how deeply are we obliged and beholding to him! what infinite sums of love must we owe him! If he had laid no other obligation upon us, had neither made, nor fed, nor clothed, nor provided for us: if he had no other claim to our love but only this, that he *first loved us*, yet this is such as we cannot frustrate, without being extremely unjust and ungrateful. For he is so much aforehand in kindness with us, hath so much gotten the start of us in love, that we shall never be able to overtake him. He loved us long before we had a being, when we existed only in his own decree to make us men,

and to provide for our happiness: so that now we are so far behindhand in arrears of love to him, that we shall need as well as have an eternity to discharge them: and should we from henceforth every moment love him more and more, to the longest imaginary period of duration, yet we shall still owe him all that eternity of love that was due before we began to love him. And shall we grudge to pay him a mite, to whom we are indebted millions? and is it not high time for us to begin to love him now, who hath loved us so long already for nothing, without the least shadow of requital?

2. He began to love us before we could any ways deserve it. For it is impossible for a creature that owes all to God, the fountain of its being, to deserve any thing at his hands; because he hath every thing from him, and so can render him nothing but what is his own already by an unalienable propriety. But the noblest and most acceptable sacrifice that we are able to render unto God is our hearty and unfeigned love; and if it were possible for us any way to deserve his love, who is so much above us, and hath such an absolute dominion over us, it would doubtless be offering up our souls to him, inflamed with love and affection: for it is this alone that consecrates all our services, and renders them valuable in the eyes of God. If love, like an universal soul, be not diffused throughout all our religion, and doth not act and animate every part of it, in God's account all our demure pretences are nothing but the lifeless puppets and images of true religion; which, though they may speak, and move, and act like that which they represent and imitate, yet want that inward form and principle that gives it life and mo-

tion: and to have nothing of religion, but merely the shape and outside, is as bad, at least in God's account, as to have none at all. Since therefore it is love that gives worth and value to all our other services, and renders them acceptable to God; it hence necessarily follows, that itself is the most grateful thing we can render to him; and that when this is wanting, we are so far from being capable of deserving his love, that nothing we do can be pleasing or acceptable in his eyes. Wherefore, since he loved us before we loved him, it is plain that it was not our desert, but his own goodness, that first endeared him to us: for when we did not love him, we could have neither form nor comeliness to attract his love, our love to him being the only beauty that can render us amiable in his eyes: so that he could have no other motive to incline him to love us, but only the immense benevolence of his own nature. Since therefore he hath loved me without any desert of mine, can I forbear to love him who hath deserved so well of me? If he had never expressed any kindness towards me, yet I have infinite reason to love him, because of the infinite loveliness of his nature: but when I add to this the unspeakable love he bore me when I had neither beauty to endear, nor desert to oblige him, what a tender care he took of my welfare, and how big his thoughts were with designs of kindness to me; I am not able to reflect upon my coldness and indifference towards him, without the greatest shame and confusion, especially considering,

3. That he began to love us when we deserved his hatred. And indeed if we consider the wretched condition in which his love found us, when it first

addressed to us, and cast its gracious eyes upon us, we shall find sufficient reason to wonder that it did not immediately convert into implacable fury. For when it first looked down on us from the battlements of heaven, it beheld us wallowing in our blood, all polluted and distained with the foulest treasons and rebellions. It saw us unanimously engaged in an unnatural conspiracy against the blessed Author of our beings, converting those very faculties he bestowed upon us into weapons of rebellion against him, and arming the effects of his bounty against his sovereign authority. It beheld our natures all depraved and vitiated, our faculties all disordered and confused, our minds surrounded with Egyptian darkness, our wills biassed with wild and irregular inclinations, our affections overgrown with monstrous and preternatural lusts, and all the beautiful structure of our natures most miserably disfigured and deformed: and certainly, one would have thought that such a loathsome spectacle as this might have been sufficient to extinguish his love for ever, and stifle all his tender resentments towards us. But so invincible was his kindness to us, that all the deformities we had superinduced upon our natures, all our unworthiness to be beloved by him, all the rude affronts and indignities we had offered, were not able so much as for one moment to stop or divert the impetuous current of his goodness. But in the midst of so many reasons that he had to hate us, he fixed his love upon us; and notwithstanding the continuance of those reasons, doth still persist to love us; and while we are abusing of his kindness, dishonouring his name, and trampling on his laws and authority, he is continually mindful and

active to do us good; and doth incessantly employ his restless thoughts, extend his watchful eye, and exert his powerful arm to contrive, and promote, and procure our happiness, as if he were resolved to be as obstinate in love as we are in unkindness; to contend with us for victory, and, if it be possible, to vanquish us with the charms of an invincible kindness. And now methinks it should be impossible for any one that hath but the reason of a man, to be so base and disingenuous as not to be endeared by such a victorious love. O blessed God! dost thou love me, who have so many ways deserved thy hatred; and can I hate thee, who hast so infinitely merited my love? Have I not been long enough thine enemy already; and hast thou not been long enough my friend, at last to thaw my obdurate enmity, and melt me into reciprocal kindness? Barbarous heart! canst thou still withstand these puissant endearments of almighty love, that hath so long repaid thee smiles for affronts, and returned thee favours for provocations? For shame, if thou hast any sense of gratitude or modesty in thee, be at last persuaded to hearken to the love of thy Maker, and to return him love for love.

4. He began to love us when he could never reap the least advantage to himself by it. Had we been capable either of benefiting or injuring him, of adding to or substracting from his happiness, his own interest might have obliged him to love us, or at least to have pretended kindness to us, that so he might the better obtain his ends upon us, and engage us to contribute more freely to his happiness. But such a poor design as this is inconsistent with the notion of a Divinity, which implies infinite per-

fection, and consequently infinite happiness: and for him who is infinitely happy to design a contribution of happiness from his creatures, implies a contradiction; because the very designing of a farther happiness implies a present want and insufficiency, which can have no place in a being that is infinitely happy already. The happiness of God therefore being so immense and secure, that nothing can be added to or substracted from it, it is impossible he should love us for any self-interest or advantage, it being out of the reach of any power whatsoever to benefit or injure him, and his love to us can have no other design but only our happiness and welfare. He is infinitely perfect and happy in himself, and consequently cannot be supposed to love us for his own advantage; it being impossible that he who is infinitely happy in himself should be capable of receiving any advantage from any thing without him: so that there can be no other end of his love, but only to render us like himself, completely perfect and happy. For when he first set his heart upon us, and chose us for his favourites, he knew his own happiness to be so immense and stable, as that he could never need our love or services either to add more to it or to continue and perpetuate it, which, from eternity to eternity, was, and is, and always will be, commensurate to the boundless capacity of his nature. But such was his innate goodness and beneficence, as would not permit him to be happy alone, to content himself in a solitary fruition of his own essential beatitudes; but to gratify the benign inclinations of his nature, he must have companions in happiness, upon whom he may diffuse his good-

ness, and imprint his own bliss and perfection: and it was only this frank and generous motive that first obliged him to cast an eye of love towards us. When we had neither worth to deserve, nor power to requite his kindness, then did his own benignity incline his heart to love us, and to invite and receive us into a participation of his happiness. He knew well enough that the most we were capable to do for him, was only to love and obey, to praise, and honour, and adore him; and that when we had done all this, it would be impossible for him to reap the least advantage by it; that if we did love and obey him, the profit would all redound to ourselves; and that if we did not, ourselves only would fare the worse for it: so that whether we did or no, it would be all one to him; his happiness would be still the same, without the least addition or substraction.

And yet, when things were in this posture, when he had no self-interest to serve upon us, no motive but his own benignity to endear him to us; then did he begin to love us, and to express the yearnings of his heart and bowels towards us. And now, how can we think of this, and not be affected with it? How can we any longer avoid being captivated with the thoughts of such a generous kindness? Consider, O my soul! thy God gains nothing by all his love to thee, but thou gainest infinitely by thy love to him; by loving him thou glorifiest thyself, and crownest thy own desires with happiness; but he is not one jot the better for loving, nor would he have been one jot the worse if he had never loved thee at all: and yet, out of a pure generous goodness, he loves thee a thousand times more than thou lovest thyself,

or art ever able to love him; and canst thou be such a wretched thing, so lost to all that is ingenuous and modest, as not to return him love for love?

5. He began to love us to such a degree, as to think nothing too dear or too good for us. Considering how little we deserve his love, how much we have deserved his hatred, and how uncapable we are to make him any valuable requital; it is sufficient matter of wonder, that ever he could prevail with himself to love us in the least degree; but that, in the midst of so many reasons to the contrary, he should not only begin to love, but to be so liberal of his kindness to us, is matter of just astonishment. It was a mighty kindness in him to create us what we are, and make such a plentiful provision for our comfortable subsistence here: for wheresoever we direct our eyes, whether we reflect them inwards upon ourselves, we behold his goodness to occupy and penetrate the root and centre of our beings, and discern the lively characters of his love in the incomparable frame and structure of our natures; or whether we extend them abroad towards the things about us, we may perceive ourselves, like fortunate islands, surrounded with an ocean of blessings, containing whatsoever is necessary for our sustenance, convenient for our use, and pleasant for our enjoyment. And is it not wondrous love in him to make such liberal provisions for such undeserving guests? But this is the smallest part of his kindness; for he hath inspired us with immortal minds, and stamped them with the most fair impresses of his own divinity, viz. a knowledge of truth, and a love of goodness, and a forward capacity of the highest perfection and purest happiness: and to fill and gratify these our noble faculties

and capacities, he hath prepared for us a heaven of immortal joys, and furnished it with all the delights that this our heaven-born mind is capable of; and lest we should fall short of it, he hath sent his blessed Son from heaven to reveal it to us, and shew us the way thither; to die for our sins, and obtain and ratify the promise of our pardon, thereby to encourage us to return to our duty and allegiance, without which we are incapable of ever enjoying that beatifical state. And lest all this should not be sufficient, he is always present with us to promote our happiness; present, by his providence to reclaim, by his angels to solicit us, and by his holy Spirit to excite and cooperate with our endeavours; so extremely careful is he not to be defeated of his kind intentions to make us everlastingly happy. O blessed God! to what a degree must thou love us, who thinkest none of these things too dear and good for us! that dost not think thy Son too good to redeem us, thy Spirit to sanctify, thy everlasting heaven to crown and reward us! And now, can our hearts hold when we think of this? can we be cold and indifferent in the midst of such a vigorous flame? Good God! what are we made of! What senseless, stony, stupid souls do we carry about us, that can be love-proof against so many charms and endearments, that can listen to so many wonders of love, with such unconcerned, such unaffected minds! Methinks, if we had but the common sense and ingenuity of men in us, it would be impossible for us, in the midst of so much love, not to be melted into a reciprocal kindness.

6. And lastly, He so began to love us, as to condescend, by all the arts of importunity, to court us to accept of his love. That, notwithstanding all our

unworthiness, he should begin to love us, and that to so strange a degree, is a most amazing instance of the infinite benevolence of his nature: but that he should condescend to address himself to us, to court and woo us, as he doth, to accept of his love and to be as happy as he would have us, is enough to astonish the most insensible soul, and even to dissolve a heart of rock into love. For thus the scripture in the most pathetic strains describes the addresses of this great lover of souls, borrowing metaphors to express his love to us, from all that is kind and loving in the creation, even from the most melting passions in mankind; from the relentings of fathers, and yearnings of mothers' bowels towards their dearest offspring. It paints him in all the charming postures of an imploring, beseeching, and importunate lover, wooing and entreating us to be happy even with tears of pity in his eyes, with charms of love in his mouth, and tenders of mercy in his hands. And when, with all the rhetoric of his love, he cannot prevail with us to live, it represents him weeping at our funerals, and, like a tender-hearted judge, pronouncing our sentence with the tears in his eyes. By which metaphorical descriptions he represents to us his infinite concern for our happiness; how much his heart is set upon it; and how hardly he can bear a defeat in his kind and merciful intentions towards us. For what but an infinite love could ever have made the King of heaven and earth to stoop so low to his rebellious subjects, as to beseech them to lay down their weapons of hostility, with which they can injure none but themselves; and to listen to his terms of mercy, and accept of his crowns and everlasting preferments? One would have thought it

had been enough for him barely to have told us how he loved us, how willing he was to pardon and advance us; and that this had been enough for ever to recommend him to the dearest affections of his creatures: but that he should moreover condescend to supplicate our repentance, to beseech us not to spurn his love, and frustrate its designs of mercy to us, Lord, how can we think of this, without being all inflamed with love to thee! It is true, he doth not come in person to us, because we are not able to bear the immediate approaches of his glory; but many a message of love he hath sent us transcribed from his very heart. He sent his Son from heaven to us, and clothed him in our natures, that therein we might be capable of conversing freely with him; and all his errand was to deliver a message of love to the world, and to court and importune them to listen to and comply with it. And when he returned again to his Father, he instituted an order of men to supply his room, and in his stead to woo thee to be happy. For *we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God,* 2 Cor. v. 20. So that you are set upon the throne; and not only men, but God himself lies prostrate before your footstool, beseeching you to lay down your arms, and to be reconciled to your best friend, that never did you the least injury, unless that be one, that he hath loved you better by a thousand degrees than ever you loved yourselves. And can we be such barbarous wretches as not to listen to him when he thus humbles himself before us, and even comes upon his knees to us for reconciliation? How justly may the whole creation be astonished, to see the great ma-

jesty of heaven condescend so low as to beseech and entreat a company of rude, disdainful rebels, whom he could every moment frown into nothing, to accept of his love, and at last comply with terms of friendship? Who would ever imagine, (but that sad experience evinces the contrary,) that, among reasonable beings, there should be found such monsters of ingratitude as to persist in enmity to God, after he hath thus humbled himself, and made so many lowly addresses only to court and woo us to be happy? And thus you see how many puissant motives to love are comprehended in these few words, *because he first loved us;* which are such as nothing can ever be able to resist, but a heart that is steeled with impudence and ingratitude. So that if, after all these obligations which God hath laid upon us, we do not at last surrender up our hearts unto him, our baseness and ingratitude is such, as nothing but our eternal ruin will be able to expiate. For when with all the endearments of his lovingkindness he finds he cannot prevail on us to love him, the very consideration how much he hath obliged us, and what unworthy requitals we have made him, will but incense him the more against us, till it hath converted his kindness into implacable fury: and when once the heats of wronged love take fire, and kindle into wrath, it will be a quenchless flame and everlasting burning. Wherefore, in the name of God, sirs, let us endeavour to affect our souls with the sense of this dear love, to warm our affections at this heavenly fire, till it hath insinuated itself into them, and converted them into its own substance. And that we may be successful herein, let us take with us these following directions:

1. Let us season our minds with good opinions of God: for since it is his goodness that is the most immediate object of our love to him, whatsoever opinions do reflect upon that, or any way tend to cloud and disgrace it, must necessarily damp our affection towards him. Whilst therefore we look upon God as a mere arbitrary being, as one that conducts all his actions by a blind omnipotent self-will, and governs the world, and dispenses rewards and punishments to his creatures, according to a certain fatal decree, which he hath made without foresight or consideration; as one that exacts impossibilities of his subjects, commands the lame to run, the blind to see, and, without ever enabling them thereunto, is resolved to damn them for ever for non-performance: whilst, I say, we look upon God through such false optics as these, they must needs represent him exceeding unlovely in our eyes. For though I doubt not but there are many men that love God heartily, notwithstanding they have entertained these sour and ghastly notions of him, yet I must seriously profess, had I such black opinions of him, I should never be able heartily to love him, though I were sure to be damned for ever for neglecting it. Wherefore, if we would kindle in our souls the love of God, let us take care, as much as in us lies, to purge our thoughts of all ill opinions of him, and to represent him fairly to our minds, what he truly is, and what the scripture represents him to be, viz. a most bountiful benefactor unto all his creation, and an universal lover of the souls of men; one that heartily desires our welfare, and is always ready to contribute to us whatsoever is necessary thereunto. Let us firmly persuade ourselves that he desires not our

ruin, but would *have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth;* that when he finally destroys any particular offender, it is in great mercy to the public; that he loves not punishment for its own sake, and never inflicts it but for some gracious and merciful end. These are such thoughts of God as are truly worthy of him, and infinitely apt to endear him to all considering minds.

2. Let us frequently consider and revolve in our minds the numerous reasons and engagements that we have to love him. For all virtue whatsoever begins in consideration; and it being a rational accomplishment, cannot be otherwise acquired but only by reason and discourse; that is, by considering the reasons, and pressing ourselves with the arguments, upon which it is founded. And thus we must do in the case before us: if we would attain to a hearty love of God, we must be often entertaining our thoughts with the consideration of those great obligations he hath laid upon us to love him; how deeply we are engaged by all the ties of gratitude and ingenuity to repay him in his own coin, and to return him love for love. Nor will it be sufficient to affect our hearts with the sense of those obligations, now and then to reflect a few slight and transient thoughts on them; but, with holy David, we must muse on, till the fire kindles; we must fix and stay our thoughts upon the consideration of God's endearing love to us, urge and press them again and again, till we have wrought and chafed them into our souls, and a heavenly warmth diffuses from them, and inflames our hearts with a divine affection. Wherefore let us frequently revolve such thoughts as these in our minds; "O my soul! how

" infinitely art thou obliged to love God, who hath
" been such a tender friend and liberal benefactor
" to thee, who loved thee before ever thou wast ca-
" pable of thinking a thought of love towards him;
" yea, and when thou didst most justly deserve to
" be excommunicated from his favour for ever; and
" who had no other aim in loving thee, but to do
" thee good and make thee happy, and thought no-
" thing too good for thee, that could either promote
" or complete thy happiness; but is so importunately
" concerned for thee, as to beseech and entreat thee
" not to reject his favours! And canst thou be cold
" and insensible in the midst of so many prevailing
" endearments? Suppose that thy fellow-creature
" had done for thee but a thousandth part of what
" thy God hath done, and thou hadst repaid his
" kindness with nothing but affronts and indignities,
" wouldest thou not call thyself a thousand ungrate-
" ful wretches, and acknowledge thyself infinitely
" unworthy of his favours? And is it less criminal to
" be ungrateful to God than to thy fellow-creature?
" Suppose thou hadst a friend that began to love
" thee as soon as thou wast born, and had persisted
" to love thee, notwithstanding thou hadst offered
" him a thousand provocations to the contrary; that
" had done thee all the good he was able, and con-
" stantly repaid thy injuries with favours; would
" not thy conscience fly in thy face, and all that is
" human in thee upbraid thy monstrous baseness?
" And hath not thy God obliged thee infinitely more
" than the best friend in the world? How then canst
" thou excuse thy coldness and indifference to him?
" Consider, O my soul! the eyes of all the spiritual
" world are upon thee; angels and saints are looking

" down from their thrones of glory, to see how thou
" wilt acquit thyself under all these mighty obliga-
" tions, which if any mortal friend had laid them
" upon thee, and thou shouldest have so ill requited
" him, all the world would have hissed at thee as a
" monster of ingratitude. And is it less infamous
" to be an ungrateful wretch towards God than to-
" wards a mortal friend? With what confidence then
" wilt thou lift up thy head among those blessed
" spirits who have been spectators of thy actions,
" who have seen thy foul ingratitude towards thy
" best friend, and must therefore brand thee for an
" inglorious wretch, abandoned of the common sense
" and modesty of human nature?" And if after you have pressed your souls with all this mighty weight of love, you should be still to learn to relove the blessed author of it, I know no other expedient but to send you to the brutes to be their scholars; to call for your spaniels, and bid them teach you, and by their kind returns of your favours, instruct your cold ungrateful hearts to make proportionate returns of love to your dearest Lord and Master. Thus let us frequently argue with ourselves, and repeat these considerations upon our minds; and certainly, if we have any sense of obligations, they cannot fail of warming and affecting our hearts.

3. Let us endeavour, so much as in us lies, to moderate our affections to the world. *Love not the world,* saith St. John, *neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,* 1 Epist. ii. 15. that is, If we inordinately love and dote upon the world; if we suffer its pleasures, profits, and honours to creep into, to hamper and inveigle our affections into an

excessive delight and complacency in them, that will so forestall and prepossess us, that we shall find no room for the love of God in our souls: our hearts will be so soaked and moistened with sensual desires and complacencies, that the pure flame of divine love will never be able to take hold of or kindle upon them. For whilst we immoderately dote upon the world, that will so engross our thoughts, so perpetually importune our desires, that no friend from heaven will ever be able to come at us; no good thought or consideration that comes to woo our souls for God will ever find admittance to them; or, if now and then they obtrude upon us, and force themselves into our minds, the world will be so busy about us, that we shall not be long at leisure to attend to them; but whilst they are addressing to us, and importuning our affections, we shall feel a thousand rival thoughts swarming and buzzing about us; and this will be beholding, that pulling, the other clasping itself about us, and wooing us not to leave and forsake them. And though between these competitors for our love, our hearts may now and then be a little wavering and irresolute, yet our fond partiality to the world will so vehemently incline and bias us, that we shall soon reject those divine thoughts that would so fain court us to a contrary affection. Wherefore, if ever we would acquire this noble and heavenly virtue of divine love, we must endeavour, as much as in us lies, to wean and withdraw ourselves from the world, to rescue ourselves from under its tyranny and dominion into our own power; that so we may be able to dispose of our time, our thoughts, and hearts, as shall seem to us most fit and reasonable. For till we have recovered our

hearts from the world into our own disposal, how can we resign them to God? before we can give him ourselves, we must be in our own power; which no man can be so long as he is enthralled to the world.

Wherefore, if we would become hearty lovers of God, we must labour, so much as in us lies, to get such a sovereignty over our earthly desires and affections, as that, whensoever we are minded to retire from the world, and converse with God, we may be able to keep them off at such a distance, as that they may not be able to intrude upon us, to mingle themselves with our contemplations, and divert our eyes from the endearing prospect of his infinite love and loveliness. And then our thoughts will stay and dwell upon this ravishing theme, like bees upon a sweet flower, and never rise till they have extracted thence the honey of Canaan, the delicious sweets of heavenly love and complacency; then we shall muse on till the fire burns, and never take off our eyes from God, till we have gazed ourselves into captivity to his love and beauty.

4. If we would attain to the love of God, we must endeavour, by the constant practice of what is agreeable to his nature, to reconcile our minds and tempers to it. For whilst our minds are averse to the perfections of his nature, to the justice, purity, and goodness of it, the most powerful motives of his love and benevolence will never be able to beget in us an hearty complacency in him. We may admire his love to us, and be sometimes moved by the consideration of it into mighty transports of sensitive passion; but it is impossible we should ever attain to a fixed and permanent delight in him, till we are reconciled to his nature. For all true and constant love is found-

ed in a likeness of natures: and therefore, till we are in some measure godlike, till we are pure as he is pure, just as he is just, good and merciful as he is good and merciful, we have not as yet so much as laid the foundation of divine love; nay, we are so far from that, that we are under a prevalent repugnancy and antipathy to the divine nature. Wherefore, if ever we would be sincere and hearty lovers of God, we must resolve to betake ourselves to the constant practice of all those eternal laws of goodness that are founded in his blessed nature; which if we do, and persist in our resolution, we shall find the practice of them will by degrees render them first tolerable, then easy, then delightful, then natural to us. And when once the laws of God's nature are thus transcribed and copied into ours; when our hearts and his stand bent the same way, and are for the main alike inclined and disposed; then we are prepared for divine love, made proper and convenient fuel to receive that heavenly flame. For as, when God sees himself in us, his goodness, purity, and holiness stamped and impressed upon our natures, he is inclined by his own self-love to be pleased with and take complacency in us; so when we come to see ourselves in God, to see all that in him for which we value ourselves, and to see it all in the utmost perfection in him, which is yet so imperfect in ourselves, our own self-love will endear him to us, and wing our souls with an active, vigorous love to him. Wherefore, if we would love God, let us live in the practice of all godlike virtues, till, by accustoming ourselves thereunto, we have conquered our own repugnancies and antipathies to his blessed nature; and then our hearts will stand open to his love, and we shall feel it enter into us, and insinuate itself into

our wills and affections, like a sprightful and active flame, till it hath all inflamed them with love, and converted them into its own substance.

5. And lastly, If we would acquire this heavenly virtue, to all the foregoing directions we must add constant and earnest prayer to God. For when we have done all, it is most certain that, without the assistance of this grace, we cannot love him; but if we do all, and then implore and supplicate his assistance, we have as much assurance of it as the promise of truth itself can give us. If therefore we have a hearty mind to love him, we shall both do our own part towards it, and earnestly implore him to do his. For so, when we petition for our daily bread, we do not say our prayers, and then sit down with our hands in our bosoms, expecting that bread should drop from heaven into our mouths; but we presently betake ourselves to some honest employment, and therein diligently endeavour to obtain what we pray for. And the same course we shall take if we desire to love God with the same sincerity as we desire food: we shall pray and endeavour, and endeavour and pray; we should be diligent in doing what is in our power, and be importunate with God to do what is only in his. And certainly, did we but know the worth of this heavenly virtue, this soul and queen of all other graces; we should count no prayers, no tears, no endeavours too much to purchase and obtain it. Did we but consider how useful and delightful it is, how at once it entices and enlivens men, what a powerful bias it claps upon their hearts to incline them to their duty; and with what joy and cheerfulness it carries them through the greatest difficulties, and turns their toils into recreations; how

it clears and smooths their countenance, revives and elevates their hearts; did men, I say, but consider this, they would give neither themselves nor Heaven rest, till they felt their cold and sluggish souls inspired and animated with it. Wherefore, to all our endeavours after it, let us join our earnest prayers to God, that he would kindle our stupid hearts and touch our cold affections with an outstretched ray from himself; that he would conquer our repugnance to him, and represent his love and beauty to our souls in such affecting and attractive forms, as may not fail to captivate our hearts and subdue our obstinate wills, that have so long held out against all the storms and batteries of his endearing goodness. And if we thus pray, and thus endeavour, and persevere in both, we shall at length most certainly feel this heavenly grace springing up within us, and growing on to maturity by insensible degrees, till at last it hath gotten an entire possession of our souls, and subdued all our powers and affections to its sweet and blessed empire: and then we shall feel ourselves acted in religion by a new soul, and carried on through all its weary stages with an unspeakable life and vigour: then all our duty will be naturalized to us, and we shall do God's will upon earth with almost the same cheerfulness and alacrity, as it is done by our blessed brethren in heaven: which God of his infinite mercy grant; *To whom be honour*, &c.

DISCOURSE XXII.

UPON

PSALM XI. 7.

For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness.

BY *righteousness* here some expositors understand the righteousness of punishment; because in the foregoing verse it is said, *Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone*, &c. and then it follows why he shall do it; *for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness:* but considering the whole, I rather believe that by *righteousness* here is meant righteousness of life and manners: for it seems more probable that the text is a reason of the two former verses than of that immediately foregoing: but the whole that is asserted is this; *The Lord trieth the righteous; but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares*, &c. As if he should have said, There is a vast difference between God's dealing with the righteous and the wicked: for though sometimes he afflicts the righteous, yet it is only to prove and try them, and to render their virtue more exemplary and illustrious: but as for the wicked, when he rains down punishments on them, it is out of a just hatred and indignation against them. And the reason why he is thus differently affected towards these different persons is, because of the different affection he bears towards their contrary qualifications: he loves the righteousness of the righteous, and that makes him chasten them in love, and for kind and

merciful ends and purposes; but he hates the wickedness of the wicked, and that makes him proceed against them with so much wrath and severity. So that by *righteousness* here he means that goodness and virtue which is inherent in righteous persons, is evident from what follows; *the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright;* that is, he looks upon them with a most gracious and benevolent aspect: which latter words, being only a fuller exemplification of the former, plainly shew, that by the *righteousness* mentioned in them is meant the righteousness of righteous persons; and consequently, that it doth not signify the righteousness of punishment, but the righteousness of manners: by which we are not to understand that single virtue of honesty or justice, but all the virtues, or virtue in the general, in its utmost compass and latitude. For so in the sacred dialect it is very usual to express the whole duty of man by *righteousness.* So, Prov. xiv. 34. *Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people;* where the opposition plainly implies, that by *righteousness* we are to understand all that is contrary to sin, that is, all that is contained within the compass of our duty. So also Heb. i. 9. *Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity;* where *righteousness* being opposed to ἀνομία, or transgression of the law in general, must, according to the rule of opposition, be understood in the same latitude, to signify all obedience to the law in general.

And indeed all our duty being a natural and eternal due either to God, our neighbour, or ourselves, the whole may very well be expressed by *righteousness;* the performance of every one of them being an

act of strict justice, the payment of a due debt, either to ourselves or others. The meaning therefore of the words is this; God, who himself is infinitely pure, and holy, and good, is a constant, hearty lover of purity and goodness in others, wheresoever he sees or finds it. In the management of which argument I shall do these two things:

I. Shew you upon what principles and reasons God is a lover of virtue and goodness.

II. What indications he hath given to the world that he is so.

I. I shall shew upon what principles and reasons God is a lover of virtue and goodness; and they are principally these four:

1. He loves righteousness or goodness, as it is an essential perfection of his own nature.

2. He loves it, as it is the main principle and foundation of his own happiness.

3. He loves it, as it is that which exalts all other creatures into his own likeness and resemblance.

4. He loves it, as it is the spring or cause from whence the highest happiness of his most beloved creatures is derived.

1. God loves righteousness or goodness, as it is an essential perfection of his own nature. For supposing God to be a reasonable being, as all acknowledge him to be who acknowledge him at all, he must be in all respects most perfectly reasonable, otherwise he would be deficient of that natural perfection which the very notion and idea of God implies; and if he be perfectly reasonable, he must be supposed to govern himself, his choices, motions, and actions, by the truest, best, and purest reason: and herein consists the perfect holiness and righteousness which the es-

sence and notion of God implies, in a perfect conformity of all his choices and actions to the eternal and infallible reason of his own mind; in choosing to do every thing which right reason requires, and refusing to do any thing which it forbids. And this is so essential to God, that to exclude it out of the notion of him, is in effect to deny his being; or, which is worse, to fancy him an almighty blind Polyphemus, that hath an arm of infinite force, but no eye in his head to guide or direct it. When therefore we submit all our choices and actions to the conduct and government of right reason, we steer our course by God's compass, and live and move by the selfsame rule whereby he governs himself and all his motions. And when we do what God would have us, we are sure to do what right reason requires; because we are sure he would have us do nothing but what is agreeable with the infallible reason of his own mind. When therefore we submit our wills to God's, our wills and his are governed by the selfsame reason, even by the most perfect reason of his all-comprehending mind, which never can deceive or be deceived. And when our wills, affections, and inclinations are once reduced under the government of God's reason, we are of the same temper with God, because we are formed and tempered by the same reason; we are affected and inclined as he is, and are made partakers of his divine nature, and are pure as he is pure, and holy as he is holy, and do communicate with him in righteousness and goodness, which is the essential glory and perfection of his own nature. So that holiness and righteousness in us being only a ray and representation of God, it is no more wonder that he loves it, than that he loves

himself; it being nothing but himself derived, his own perfection copied out and transcribed into our temper and natures. Were the sun a living being, we cannot imagine but as he would be infinitely pleased with his own inherent brightness, so he would be greatly delighted to behold that vast sphere of light which he diffuses round about him; to see his own outstretched rays shining through this spacious world, and glorifying with their quick reflections all those dark and opaque bodies that are continually moving round about him. How then can we imagine that the living God, who is infinitely glorious in holiness himself, and loves himself infinitely for being so, can without vast delight and satisfaction behold his own beauty, light, and purity, shining on the face of his creatures; that he should not be enamoured with the reflections of that which is the brightness of his own being; and take infinite complacency, when he looks down from his throne, and beholds his creatures gilded with his rays, and glorified with his own glory? For if God love himself, he must love what is suitable to himself; and consequently, since himself is righteous, he must love righteousness, or quarrel with the perfection of his own nature. And this reason of his love of righteousness is implied in the very words, *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.*

2. He loves righteousness and true goodness, as it is the main principle and foundation of his own happiness. For if he were not just, and holy, and good, he would be a miserable being, notwithstanding all his power and knowledge: for though by these he might defend himself from all foreign hurt or injury, yet could he not secure his own content

by them, or enjoy himself with any peace or pleasure. For perfect holiness, as I have shewed you, consists in an exact conformity of actions to the eternal rules of reason; but God having a full and perfect comprehension of the eternal reasons of things, could never be satisfied with himself if he should act unreasonably, because his reason would condemn his practice, and his own knowledge would libel and upbraid him. For whenever he reflected on himself, his own all-seeing eye would detect him; and by unmasking the deformity of his actions, would render him an inglorious spectacle to himself. How then could he enjoy himself, whilst in the glass of his own omniscience he beheld himself so odiously represented? What content could he take in his own choices and actions, whilst his own infallible reason disapproved them, and their unreasonableness exposed them to the just reproaches of his own mind? No, certainly, should he any ways swerve in his own choices, affections, or actions from the eternal reason of his own mind, he would be so far from being pleased with himself, that he would be his own eternal torment; and that infinite reason which he himself cannot deceive or impose on, would so expose and shame him, that whensoever he reviewed himself, he would be sure to appear a most ghastly spectacle in his own eyes. That therefore which renders him so infinitely happy in himself, is not so much the power he hath to defend himself from foreign hurts and injuries, as the exact agreement of all his motions and actions with the all-comprehending reason of his own mind.

He always sees what is best, and what he so sees he always chooses and affects; and this makes him

perfectly satisfied with himself, and fills him with infinite joy and complacency. Whenever he surveys himself in the glorious mirror of his own mind, he discerns nothing in himself but what is infinitely lovely and amiable, nothing but what exactly corresponds with the fairest idea of his own infinite reason; every thing in him is as it should be, every motion and every action so perfectly good and exactly reasonable, that his own all-seeing eye can discern no possible degree of perfection wanting in them: and this makes him infinitely pleased with himself, infinitely joyed and contented in the prospect of his own beauty and glory. So that God's holiness and righteousness, or, which is the same thing, the exact agreement of his choices and actions with the infallible reason of his own mind, being the principal and eternal spring of his happiness, it is no wonder if he loves it wheresoever he finds it: for how should he forbear being pleased and delighted with it, when he hath such a continued experiment of the blessed effects of it in his own bosom; when he feels himself made happy by it, and hath every moment a fresh relish of the joys and pleasures which result from it? Can he be so insensible of his own happiness, as not to be enamoured with the blessed cause of it? or can the tree be indifferent to him, when the fruit of it is so infinitely grateful? No, certainly; it is impossible but that the eternal sense he hath in himself of the joy, the pleasure, the bliss, of being holy, should infinitely endear holiness to him, and engage his soul in an everlasting love of it.

3. God loves righteousness, as it is an improvement and exaltation of his creatures into his own likeness and resemblance. Every being that loves

itself, naturally affects, so far as it is able, to derive itself, to beget its own image, and propagate its own likeness and resemblance, which is an immediate consequence of that principle of self-love that is in us, which inclines us to increase and multiply ourselves, and diffuse and spread our own tempers and natures. And no wonder then that God, who is the best of beings, and whose love to himself is as infinite as his own beauties and perfections, should affect to derive and communicate himself, to beget and propagate his own most amiable image in his creatures. The infinite love which he bears to himself cannot but engage him to like and approve his own likeness; and what he likes, he must needs be inclined to produce where it is not, and to love where it is. But now righteousness being that moral attribute which comprises all those perfections of his nature, wherein the beauty and glory of it consists, is the only accomplishment that can render a creature like him, in that which renders him so infinitely lovely in his own eyes. As for omnipotence, omniscience, eternity, and omnipresence, they are amiable only as they are crowned with infinite righteousness and goodness; and abstracted from these, they have nothing of form or comeliness in them. That therefore which moulds us into a resemblance of God, and renders us like him in that which is the beauty of all his other attributes, is righteousness; and therefore this he must love, if he love himself, because it is his own image. As for power, and knowledge, and length of duration, though we should partake of them with him to the highest degree that is possible for creatures, yet we may be infinitely unlike him: for so the

devils are, who yet are liberally endowed with these natural perfections of the divinity; but the more they employ their power and knowledge to unrighteous purposes, the more ungodlike they are for being powerful and knowing; and then only are knowledge and power godlike perfections, when righteousness and goodness is their scope and rule: for without these they are only the perfections of devils; but good and righteous devils are contradictions in terms. Since therefore it is righteousness only that can stamp us godlike creatures, God must needs love it out of that natural inclination which he and all other beings have, to propagate his own likeness. For without righteousness no creatures can resemble him; and therefore, if he love to be resembled, as he must needs do, because he loves himself, he must love that which gives the resemblance; and this, and this only, is righteousness and true goodness.

4. And lastly, God loves righteousness, as it is the spring or cause from whence the highest happiness of his creatures is derived. For he loves beings more or less according to their intrinsic worth and value; and doubtless, of all orders of beings, there are none so valuable as the rational: and therefore, if he love these most, he cannot but be desirous of their happiness; and if he be, he cannot but love that which is the spring and cause of it, and this is universal righteousness. For the foundation of our happiness must necessarily be laid in the perfection of our natures; and our natures being rational, the perfection of them must consist in a perfect compliance of all their powers and faculties with the eternal rules of reason, which is all one with uni-

versal righteousness. For doubtless, the highest perfection of reasonable faculties is to act most reasonably, and then they act most reasonably when they govern themselves by the unchangeable laws of righteousness. Righteousness therefore being our perfection, as we are reasonable beings, must necessarily be the spring and principle of our happiness; and it is as impossible for us to be happy without it, as it is to be well in sickness, or at ease under pain. For to the happiness of every nature that is capable of being happy, two things are requisite: first, that there be no disorder within itself, that its parts and faculties be not distempered, nor their vigour and activity lessened and abated: secondly, that all its faculties be employed and exercised about such objects as are most grateful and suitable to their natures; upon both which accounts, righteousness is most necessary to the happiness of every reasonable nature. For in the first place, it is righteousness that rectifies all their disorders, and reduces them to their native and most genuine temper. No reasonable nature is well and in health, so long as it acts unreasonably and unrighteously; its pulse beats disorderly, while it beats either faster or slower than right reason prescribes; while it acts either on this side or beyond the medium, in the defect or excess of virtue; and whilst it is thus sick and distempered, it is impossible it should be happy. But now, by acting righteously, it revives and grows well again; it throws off those unreasonable, and consequently unnatural inclinations, that clogged and obstructed all its regular motions, and by degrees recovers to the native temper and complexion of a rational nature; and when once it hath perfectly

discharged itself of all those unreasonable and unrighteous humours that disordered it, it will then live in perfect health and ease, and all its languishing faculties be restored to their natural vigour and activity. And then, secondly, as righteousness recovers us from all the distempers of our nature, so it employs and exercises our faculties about such objects as are most grateful and suitable to them. For truth and true goodness are the only objects that can gratify a reasonable nature acting reasonably, and about these doth righteousness naturally dispose our faculties to employ and exercise themselves; it disposes our understandings to contemplate upon, and our wills to embrace and choose that God who is the fountain of all truth and goodness: for every thing loves its own like, and what it loves it is inclined to think on. So that when we are righteous, as God is, we shall naturally love him, because he is like us; and then our love to him will still incline our thoughts to the contemplation of his beauty and glories; and so the more righteous we grow, the more we shall love him; and the more we love him, the more our understandings will be inclined to meditate upon him, and so more and more, till we arrive at that city of vision where we shall see him face to face, and be eternally ravished with the love and contemplation of him. Thus righteousness, you see, is the spring and cause of our happiness; and being so, he must needs love it, who above all things desires and solicits our welfare: for he being perfectly happy from himself, cannot need our misery to augment his happiness, and therefore cannot desire it: but on the contrary, he must desire our happiness, out of that infinite complacency and delight

which he takes in his own; it being impossible that he, whose delight and love is always founded on the same motives, should delight in contrary objects in different subjects, in happiness in himself, and in misery in his creatures: and if he desire our happiness, as most certainly he doth, how can he forbear to love and take complacency in that which contributes so much to it? Thus you see upon what reasons and principles it is that God is so firm a lover of righteousness.

II. I now proceed in the second place to shew you what indications he hath given the world of his steady affection and good-will to righteousness. Now these, though they are many, and almost infinite, may be reduced to two general heads: 1st, The natural indications; 2dly, The supernatural ones: of both which I shall endeavour to give you some brief account.

1. God hath given us sundry natural indications of his love of righteousness; all which I shall reduce to these four heads:

1. He hath imprinted a law upon our natures, which approves of righteous actions, and condemns their contraries.

2. He hath endued our minds with a grateful sense of righteous actions, and a natural horror of their contraries.

3. He hath coupled good effects to all righteous actions, and bad ones to their contraries.

4. He hath implanted in us natural abodings of the future reward of righteous actions, and the future punishment of their contraries.

1. One indication of God's love of righteousness is, his imprinting a law upon our natures, which approves all righteous actions and disapproves their contraries: and this law is that natural reason which

is either connate with our understanding, or doth immediately result from the righteous use and exercise of it. For such is the frame of our understandings, that whensoever we impartially reason about things, we are forced to distinguish between good and evil; and, without offering infinite violence to our faculties, we can never persuade ourselves that to blaspheme God, or to reverence him, to lie or speak truth, to honour our parents, or to scorn, or despitefully use them, are indifferent things: for as soon as we open the eye of our reason, we immediately discern such an essential difference between them, as forces us to condemn the one and approve the other: and hence we see that, as for the great strokes of unrighteousness, they have as much the universal judgment of our reason against them, as any false conclusion in the mathematics: whereas the goodness of their contrary virtues is as universally acknowledged by us, as the truth of any first principle in philosophy. God therefore having created us with such a faculty as doth so necessarily pass such a contrary judgment upon righteous and unrighteous actions, we must either say that he hath made us judge falsely, or else acknowledge this judgment to be his, as well as the faculty that made it; and if it be, then it is a sufficient indication of his love of righteousness, that he hath so framed our faculties, that, without apparent violence, they cannot but approve of it. For whatsoever our faculties do naturally speak, they are made to speak from the Author of nature; they only speak what he hath dictated to them; and so what they say he says, who hath put his word into their mouths, and hath made them speak it. Our faculties therefore being God's

the consequents of human actions, we shall generally find that all moral good resolves into natural, in the health and pleasure, the credit and tranquillity of those that practise it. For so the first great Mover in that course and series of things which he hath established in the world hath ordered and disposed it; that every action which is morally good should ordinarily tend to and determine in some natural benefit and advantage; that the good government of every passion should tend to the tranquillity of our minds, and the due regulation of every appetite centre in the health and pleasure of our bodies; that abstinence and humility, honesty and charity, should have happy effects chained to them; that they should contribute to our good both private and public; and that their contrary vices should be always pregnant with some mischievous inconvenience; that they should either unite the organs of our reason, or impair the vigour and activity of our tempers, or embroil the peace and tranquillity of our minds, or invade the commonweal of societies, which includes the interest of each particular member. Such contrary effects as these are as necessary to virtuous and vicious actions, in that course of things which God hath established, as light is to the sun, or heat to the fire; by which he hath plainly demonstrated, how contrarily he is affected to those contrary causes. For by those natural goods and evils which are appendant to human actions, he hath plainly distinguished them into moral goods and evils; and those good and bad effects which he hath annexed to them, are most sensible marks of his love of the one, and his hatred of the other. For, to be sure he would never have made righteousness the cause of so much

good to us, if he had not loved it; nor wickedness the spring of so many mischiefs and inconveniencies, if he had not hated and abhorred it. The effects of righteousness are ordinarily a reward, and the consequents of sin a punishment to itself, and this by God's own order and disposal: and pray, by what significations can a lawgiver more effectually declare his love and hatred of actions, than by rewarding and punishing them?

4. And lastly, Another indication of God's love of righteousness is, the natural presages and abodings which he hath implanted in our natures of the future reward of righteous actions, and the future punishment of their contraries. That there are such abodings as these in human nature is apparent by this, that antecedently to all divine revelation, men of all ages, nations, and religions, have felt and experienced them; yea, and that it hath been experienced not only among the politer and more learned nations, who may be supposed to be persuaded of a future state by the probable arguments of philosophy; but also among the most barbarous and uncultivated, who cannot be supposed to have believed it upon principles of reason. For though some of them have been so rude as to disband society, and live like beasts, without laws and government, yet have they not been able to extinguish these their natural hopes and fears of future rewards and punishments; which is an unanswerable evidence how deeply the sense of another world is imprinted upon human nature. And as we have such a natural sense of a future state as we cannot easily stifle, so our minds do naturally abode, that we shall fare well or ill in it according as we behave ourselves righteously or unrighteously in this

life. When we do well, and reflect upon it, it leaves a delicious farewell on our minds; our conscience smiles, and promises glorious things that we shall reap from it, most happy and blessed fruits in the other world. And as the sense of doing well doth naturally suggest to us the most ravishing hopes and blissful expectations, so the sense of doing ill fills our minds with sad and dire presages; our conscience abodes us a black and woful eternity, wherein we shall dearly pay for our sinful delights and gratifications. And though for the present we can divert and stifle this troublesome sense of our natures, yet *naturam expellas* is true in this also; "though "we thrust off nature with a fork, yet it will return "again upon us;" and a fit of sickness, or a sudden calamity, or a serious thought, will soon awake and receive in it those black prognostics of our future torment. And hence we generally find, that bad men are most afraid of eternity when they are nearest to it; their fear, like other natural motions, being swiftest when it is nearest its centre. For so Plato hath observed, ἐπειδάν τις ἐγγὺς, "When men "are near death, or suppose themselves near it, there "arises in them great fear and thoughtfulness of a "future state, which before they never thought of." And that this springs not from superstition, but from nature, is evident by this, that atheists themselves, who are most remote from superstition, when they come to die, are rarely able to suppress this ominous dread and fear of another world; but in despite of themselves, are forced into those dismal expectations which before they laughed at; a clear demonstration that these ill abodings spring from something within them that they cannot conquer; and that

what their minds now speak, is not so much the sense of their opinion as their nature. And this language of nature is a clear expression of God's love of righteousness; for the voice of nature is only the voice of the God of nature echoed and rebounded: and, to be sure, whatever he imprints upon our natures is the sense and meaning of his own heart, since his veracity will not permit him to print any falsehood there. And since by these our natural abodings, the God of nature proposes to us a future reward if we are righteous, and future punishment if we are wicked; he hath hereby as certainly declared to us how much he loves righteousness and hates the contrary, as he can possibly do by the most express promise which he hath made to reward the one, or threatening to punish the other. And thus you see what natural indications and discoveries God hath made of his unfeigned love of righteousness; which are such, as without any additional revelation are sufficient to convince considering men, that God is a most sincere and affectionate lover of righteousness and righteous men; and that if we will but unfeignedly submit ourselves to the eternal laws of goodness, we shall thereby make ourselves the best friend, who is a never-failing fountain of goodness; and who will do us more good than all the beings in the world, should they conspire to be our benefactors; and that on the contrary, if we persist in sin and unrighteousness, we shall most certainly provoke him to be our mortal enemy, and render ourselves eternally odious and hateful in his eyes; that his incensed wrath will sooner or later break forth upon us, and prosecute us with eternal vengeance; and that we can expect nothing but black and dismal is-

sues, while we are hated by him who is the fountain of all love and goodness. All this we may be sufficiently convinced of, by seriously attending to those natural discoveries which God hath made of his love of righteousness. But yet because he saw mankind so unattentive to the voice of their nature, so unobservant of its language and meaning, as to run headlong on, notwithstanding all its countermands, into the greatest impiety and wickedness; he hath been graciously pleased to add to these natural discoveries of his love of righteousness, sundry great and eminent supernatural ones, such as, one would think, were sufficient to rouse and awake the most stupid and insensible creatures into a serious attention to them. All which are reducible to these following heads:

1. His conferring such great and miraculous favours upon righteous persons, and inflicting such severe judgments on the wicked.

2. His making so many revelations to the world for the promoting of righteousness, and discountenancing of sin.

3. His sending his own Son into the world to transact such mighty things for the encouragement of righteousness, and discouragement of sin.

4. His promising such vast rewards to us, upon condition of our being righteous, and denouncing such fearful punishments against us, in case we do neglect it.

5. His granting his blessed Spirit to us to excite us to, and assist us in our endeavours after righteousness.

1. One supernatural expression of God's love of righteousness is, his conferring great and miraculous

favours upon righteous persons, and inflicting severe judgments upon the wicked. And of this we have infinite instances in the several ages of the world; there being scarce any history, either sacred or profane, which abounds not with them; several of which, both blessings and judgments, do as plainly evince themselves to be intended for rewards and punishments, as if they had been attended with a voice from heaven declaring the reasons for which they were bestowed and inflicted. For how many famous instances have we of the miraculous deliverances of righteous persons, who by an invisible hand have been rescued from the greatest dangers, when in all outward appearance their condition was hopeless and desperate; and of wonderful blessings that have happened to them, not only without, but contrary to all secondary causes? Of some that have been so eminently rewarded in kind, as that the good which they received was a most visible token of the good which they did; of others that have received the blessings they asked, whilst they were praying for them, and obtained the grant of them with such distinguishing circumstances, as did plainly signify them to be the answers and returns of their devout desires? And so on the contrary, how many notable examples are there of such miraculous judgments inflicted upon unrighteous persons, as have either exceeded the power of all secondary causes, or else have been caused by them contrary to their natural tendency; of men that have been punished in the very act of their sin, and sometimes in the very part by which they have offended; that have had the evil of their sin retaliated upon them in a correspondent evil of suffering; and been punished

with those very judgments which they have imprecated on themselves, in justification of a falsehood? Now, though in the ordinary course of things, that of the Wise Man is most true, *that we know neither love nor hatred by any thing that is before us*; because ordinarily *all things come alike to all: and there is one event to the righteous and the wicked*, Eccles. ix. 1, 2. yet when the providence of God so visibly steps out of its ordinary course to bless the righteous and punish the wicked, it is a plain indication of his love to the one and his hatred to the other. For these irregular providences have plain and visible tokens of God's love and anger imprinted on their foreheads, and it would be stupidity to attribute them either to a blind chance, or the necessary revolutions of secondary causes, when they are stamped with such legible characters of their being designed and intended for rewards and punishments. For if these were either casual or necessary, why should they not happen alike to all, as well as ordinary providences? Why should not there be as many examples of the miraculous blessings and deliverances of the unrighteous, as there are of the righteous? Why should not as many men have suffered as remarkably the evils which they have imprecated on themselves in attesting the truth, as there have in attesting lies and falsehoods? Why should so many have been struck dumb or dead in the act of perjury, and not one that we ever heard of suffer the like calamity in witnessing the truth? In a word, why should so many bad men have suffered such calamities as were plain retaliations in kind, of their cruel and unjust actions, as Adoni-bezek, for instance, did in the cutting off his thumbs and great

toes; whilst so few, if any, for doing justice upon others, have by any such casual and irregular providence been exposed to the evils they inflicted? Since therefore in every age of the world there have happened such goods to righteous men, as have the plainest characters of divine rewards upon them; and such evils to the wicked, as do evidently bespeak themselves intended for divine punishments; God hath thereby sufficiently declared his love of the one, and his hatred of the other. For by their rewards and punishments, all lawgivers do declare their love and hatred of the facts they are annexed to; and therefore to be sure, if the supreme lawgiver had not loved righteousness and hated the contrary, he would never have so eminently rewarded the one, and punished the other, as he hath apparently done.

2. Another supernatural indication of God's love of righteousness is, his making so many revelations to the world for the promoting of righteousness and discountenancing of sin. That God hath made sundry revelations to the world is evident in fact; because there are sundry revelations which have been sufficiently demonstrated by those miraculous effects of the divine power which have accompanied the ministration of them: such are those contained in the five books of Moses, and the Prophets, which have been almost amply confirmed both by the miracles which were wrought by the inspired authors of them, and by the exact accomplishments of the several predictions contained in them: and such is also that last and best revelation contained in the New Testament; which, both by the types and predictions contained in the law and the prophets, and

by the infinite miracles wrought by Jesus and his followers, who were the immediate ministers of it, together with its own inherent goodness, is so effectually demonstrated divine, that no man who weighs the proof of it can suspect it, unless he be infinitely prejudiced against it. Now, if you consult these several divine revelations, you will plainly perceive that the main drift and design of them is to promote righteousness, and suppress whatsoever is contrary to it; that the several revelations made to Abraham and his children were all but one repeated covenant of righteousness; that the law of Moses consisteth partly of ceremonious rites, which were either intended for divine hieroglyphics, to instruct the dull and stupid Jews in the principles of inward purity and goodness, or else for types and sacred figures of the holy mysteries of the gospel; partly of precepts of moral righteousness, together with some few prudential ones, that were suitable to the genius and polity of that people; and partly of such promises and threats as were most apt to oblige them to the practice of those righteous precepts. As for the prophets, the substance of their revelations was either reprehensions of sin, together with severe denunciations against it; or invitations to righteousness, together with gracious promises of rewards to follow it; or predictions of the Messias, and that everlasting righteousness which should be introduced by him. And then as for the gospel, all the duties of it consist either in instances or means of righteousness; and all the doctrines of it are nothing else but powerful arguments and motives to persuade us to the practice of those duties. Thus righteousness, you see, is the main centre to

which all true revelation tends, the mark at which the righteous Lord hath continually levelled and directed it. What a plain demonstration therefore is this of the unfeigned love and respect he bears it, that he did not think it sufficient to imprint a law of righteousness upon our natures, and stamp upon our beings so many indications of his love to it; but seeing us swerve and deviate from it, hath from time to time, by so many loud and reiterated voices from heaven, invited and called us back again: so that if he be cordial and sincere in what he says, (as it would be absurd and impious to suspect the contrary,) we cannot doubt but he heartily loves that, which by so many immediate revelations he hath so earnestly importuned us to embrace.

3. Another supernatural indication of God's love of righteousness is, his sending his own Son into the world to transact such mighty things for the encouragement of it, and persuading men to it. For to advance righteousness was the main design of all those mighty things which the Son of God did and suffered in this world; the design of all that holy and innocent life which he led, was to propose to our imitation a perfect example of righteousness, that so treading our way before us, we might have not only the line of his precepts, but also the print of his footsteps to direct us; and that by beholding so fair a draught of righteousness drawn so exquisitely to the life, and in every part so exactly answering to the sweetest and most amiable ideas of it, we might be both invited and instructed to copy and imitate it in our actions. For what he saith of that illustrious act of charity and humility, his washing his disciples' feet, is truly applicable to the whole

course of his actions; *For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done unto you*, John xiii. 15. And as his life was an example of righteousness, so his death was a most urgent motive to it: for hereby he made expiation for our sins, and obtained an act of pardon and indemnity for every rebel that would lay down his arms, and return to his duty and allegiance; and by obtaining this, he hath given us infinite encouragement to return; since if we do so, we have most ample assurance that we shall be received into grace and favour. And though I cannot deny, but if God had pleased he might have granted such an act of pardon to us without the consideration of Christ's death and sacrifice; yet I am sure, if he had, it could never have been such an effectual motive as it was to oblige us to righteousness for the future. For should he have granted us pardon merely upon our repentance, without any other motive or consideration, he would have discovered so much seeming easiness and indulgence in the procedure, as would have very much emboldened such disingenuous creatures as we to presume upon his lenity, and turn his grace into wantonness. And if, to prevent our presuming upon his lenity, it was necessary that he should have some other motive to pardon us, besides that of our repentance; then it was no less necessary, that this other motive should be such as did clearly argue and evince his righteous severity: for otherwise it would have no force in it to prevent our presumption. And what motive of pardon could better evince his severity, than the suffering of some other in our room, especially the suffering of his own Son, the greatest and dearest Person in the whole creation? For not

to be moved to grant a public pardon to us upon our hearty repentance, unless this blessed Person would engage to die for us, whose infinite greatness gave such an inestimable value to his sufferings, as rendered them adequate to what we had deserved to suffer, was as great an argument of his inflexible severity against sin, as if he should have destroyed at one blow the whole world of sinners. So that as he hath expressed an infinite mercy to us, in admitting his own Son to die for us; so in refusing to pardon us upon any less motive than his precious death, he hath expressed an infinite hatred to our sins; and so that very death which moved God to pardon us, moves us to stand in awe of his severity; the death of the Son of God, upon which we are pardoned, being the most terrible instance that ever was of the desert of our sin, and God's displeasure against it. Thus our blessed Lord hath not only given us the greatest encouragement, by procuring our pardon, to return from our iniquities, but by procuring it in such a formidable way, he hath given us the most dreadful warning of God's severity against them. So that now we cannot think upon the reason for which our past offences are forgiven, without being vehemently moved to future obedience. And thus the main design, you see, both of Christ's life and death, was to recall us from sin to the practice of righteousness: and hence he is said to have *given himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, Titus ii. 14. And then he arose again from the dead, to confirm that righteous doctrine which he had revealed to the world, and visibly ascended into heaven, to give

condemn thy creatures to so wretched a state, had not their unrighteous practices been infinitely odious in thine eyes! No, certainly; the good God would never have made hell for a trifle, for the sake of any thing that his nature could have endured or dispensed with: nor would he ever have cast any unrighteous creature into it, were it not for the implacable abhorrence he hath to all unrighteousness. And therefore, since he hath not only made hell, but warns us of and threatens us with it, we may be sure he infinitely abominates that for which he made and threatens it; and consequently, that he is infinitely concerned for the cause and interest of righteousness.

5. And lastly, Another supernatural indication of God's love of righteousness is, his granting his blessed Spirit to us to excite us to, and assist us in our endeavours after righteousness. First, he sent his Son to propagate righteousness by his ministry, his life, and death; and upon his return to heaven, he sent his Spirit to supply his room, and carry on that dear design of which his Son had already laid the foundation. For in Christ's personal absence, his Spirit acts in his stead; and was sent down from the Father by virtue of his intercession, to be his vicegerent in the world, to promote and enlarge his heavenly kingdom, to conquer our hearts, and subdue our stubborn wills to the obedience of his most righteous laws. So that the Holy Ghost doth now preside in the church as the supreme minister and vicarious power of our Saviour; and is continually employed, even as our Saviour himself was whilst he abode upon earth, in driving on the interest of righteousness; for hitherto tend all his secret operations on the minds of men: this is the reason why

he suggests so many good thoughts, and by repeating them thick upon us, keeps our minds so fixed upon them, that so, if possible, he may recollect our dispersed minds, that are continually wandering to and fro in this infinite maze of sensual vanities, and engage them to attend to such motives of righteousness, as are most apt to excite them to wise and virtuous resolutions. So that as in the beginnings of Christianity, before Christian motives to righteousness were believed, the Holy Spirit did operate more visibly and miraculously to confirm and demonstrate the truth of them; so now they being believed, and thereupon the necessity of such miraculous operations superseded, his great work is to object and present them to our minds, and fix our thoughts upon them, till they have effected in us those good resolutions for which they were designed and intended: and how diligently he pursues this work, our own experience certifies and informs us: for how often do we find good thoughts and motions injected to us, we know not how nor whence? and how many times do these unexpected thoughts kindle holy desires in us before we are aware? Which desires being fed by a fresh supply of holy motions and suggestions, are many times nourished into good resolutions; and these being still backed with those repeated motions which do frequently press with strong importunity upon us, are at last perfected into firm and lasting principles of action. Thus does the Holy Spirit continually knock at the door of our souls, and solicit us with the greatest earnestness to sober and righteous resolutions: and this is his constant employment among men, and will be so to the end of the world; till Jesus, whose vicegerent he is,

and whose absence he supplies, returns in person from heaven, to keep his last and general assizes upon earth. And can we imagine that God would have all this while employed his Holy Spirit in the service of righteousness, to drive on its interest and solicit its cause, if it had not been infinitely dearer to him? No, certainly; he sets a greater value on the pains of his Son and Spirit, than to busy them about a trifle; to employ them so industriously as he has done, in an affair which he had little regard for. If his heart had not been extremely set upon it, he would have found out some other employment for those divine and illustrious persons, and not have engaged them so everlastingly as he hath done in the service and ministry of righteousness.

Having thus explained and proved the proposition, *that the righteous Lord loveth righteousness*, I shall conclude with some few inferences drawn from the whole argument.

1. From hence I infer, that no religion or proposition of religion can be true, that either directly or by true consequence is an enemy to righteousness. For all true religion is from God; and therefore to be sure, that cannot be true which either directly or indirectly opposes that which God so dearly loves. This therefore is a plain conviction of the notorious falsehood and imposture of popery, that in all those doctrines it hath superinduced upon the common principles of Christianity, it is an open enemy to righteousness. As for instance, it is a common principle of Christianity, that God alone is to be worshipped as the supreme author and fountain of our beings; upon which the church of Rome hath superstructed the invocation of saints and angels; which

they perform in the same words, and with the same address, as they do the invocation of God himself. For though they pretend to pray to them only for their prayers; yet in their public offices, they do not only beg their prayers to God for them, but also invocate them as sovereign gods and independent disposers of the mercies they pray for. Thus in the Hours of Sarum they implore the angels to direct their thoughts, and words, and actions, in the way of salvation, that so they may be able to fill up the number of the angelical orders, which by the fall of Lucifer was diminished; to protect them from the devils, and comfort them when they are dying. Particularly, St. Michael they beseech to be their coat of mail, St. Gabriel to be their helmet, St. Raphael to be their shield, St. Uriel to be their defender, St. Cherubim to be their health, St. Seraphim to be their truth; and all the holy angels and archangels to keep, protect, and defend them, and bring them to eternal life. And as for Raphael, to whom they seem to bear a more particular affection, they style him the best physician both of body and soul; and pray him to enlighten both their spiritual and carnal eyes. And then, as for the saints, they do as immediately address to them in their forms of prayer, for sanctification, pardon, temporal and eternal blessings, as they can possibly do to God himself; particularly, the blessed Virgin they adorn with the most glorious titles of God; and in her psalter, address to her in the same forms of invocation which David uses in his psalms to God; they style her the *lady almighty*, the *author of mercy*, the *queen of infinite majesty*, and the *hope of all the world;* praying, that her mercy may lighten upon them as they do put their

trust in her; and a great deal more to this purpose. And as for Joseph, her husband, they style him the support of their lives, and the pillar of the world; beseeching him with his carpenter's axe (a tool fit only to work upon such wooden souls) to hew down their sins, that they may be adopted timber for the palace of heaven. In a word, in their present Breviary they implore St. Peter to loose them by his word from the bonds of sin; and supplicate the apostles, who, by their word, (if the prayer lies not,) do lock and unlock the gates of heaven, to loose them from all sin by their command. They humbly entreat St. Genovesa to have pity on those that hope in her; to blot out their sins, and send them relief and comfort; and implore St. Sebastian to preserve their country from the plague, to preserve their bodies, and heal their minds; and to win him thereunto, assure him that all their hope is in him. These and several other such like instances there are of their prayers both to angels and saints, in which they do as immediately invoke them both for temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings, as they can do God himself, who is the sole disposer of them. And is not this most palpable unrighteousness towards God, to strip him thus of his divine prerogatives, and clothe his creatures in them before his face? But against this black charge Bellarmine hath a very quaint salvo: "When we "say," says he, "St. Peter have mercy upon me, or "so; we supply the sense with this mental construc-"tion, Procure mercy for me by thy prayers or me-"rits:" which is a plain confession that the words are unwholesome in themselves, and cannot be safely used without being corrected by a more honest meaning, and that if the votaries of that church do not take

care to mend their public prayers with their private meanings, they incur the guilt, or at least the danger of idolatry. For we cannot address more immediately in any form of words to God for any mercy, than they do in these to the saints and angels; and therefore, if they do not actually address to them as gods, it is because they construe those forms into a different sense from their most obvious meaning. For when they say, "Lord, have mercy upon me," they may mean, with as little force to the words, "Procure me mercy, O Lord, from St. Peter, by "thy prayers and merits," as they do when they say, "St. Peter, have mercy upon me; procure me "mercy from God, O St. Peter, by thy prayers and "merits." And what a dreadful profanation is it of the divine Majesty, to use such forms of address to God and St. Peter, as do leave our minds indifferent, either to pray to St. Peter to pray to God for us, or to pray to God to pray to St. Peter for us! Again, it is a common doctrine of Christianity, that our Saviour hath instituted the holy eucharist to be a memorial of his sufferings, and a seal of that everlasting covenant which he purchased by them; upon which the Roman church hath superstructed that monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation; which, besides the disgrace it doth to our holy religion, by reason of those ridiculous absurdities and gross contradictions it fastens upon it; it puts such an extravagant sense upon the first institution of this holy ministry, that if our Saviour had really meant it, it would have been enough to expose him to the general scorn and derision of mankind. For if when he first instituted it, he had really pretended to convert the sacramental elements into the substance of his own

body and blood, this must have been the sense of his words and actions: These outward elements, which but just now were made bread and wine, are now by my almighty benediction converted into the substance of my body and blood: this very body which sits here at the upper end of the table, lies there under those species of bread and wine which you see upon it. My head and feet, and every part of me, are all entirely within every crumb of that unleavened bread; and yet those several crumbs, which do each contain my whole body, contain not several bodies; and if you divide them into ten thousand crumbs, and distribute them into ten thousand different places, yet in all those different places I am the same entire and undivided body. And though as I sit here, you see, I am at least a foot broad, and five or six foot long, yet in those little crumbs that lie before you I am no bigger than a pin's head; and yet, upon my honest word, I am in all my parts and dimensions under the outward species of every one of them, and so am every whit as broad, and thick, and long in them, as I do now appear in this visible body. And as for my blood, which is at least two gallons, though it is all contained within the veins and vessels of this body, yet it is all at the same time within that cup, which, I confess, is hardly large enough to contain the eighth part of it: and though you twelve shall every one drink his share of it, yet every one shall drink it all, that is, out of this one cup of my blood, which at most contains but a quart, each man of you twelve shall drink the whole two gallons. But let not these things astonish you, for now I am doing yet stranger things than these; and first, I take myself, (it being supposed both by papists

and protestants, that Christ himself first ate and drank those sacred elements,) that is, I take my hands into my own hands, and put my mouth into my own mouth, and swallow down my hands, and mouth, and throat, and stomach, through my own throat into my own stomach; so that now my whole body is entirely within my stomach, though the whole, you see, except my stomach, is still entirely without it. And having thus eaten and drank up myself, in the next place, I give myself to be eat and drank by every one of you. And now, while I am wholly buried within each of your stomachs and my own, I shall begin a sacred hymn, and conclude with my farewell sermon. This, supposing our Saviour had intended a real transubstantiation, had been the natural sense, or rather nonsense of his words and actions, in the first institution of this sacred mystery. And what a most shameful disgrace is it to the most righteous religion that ever was, to fasten such wild extravagancies upon its great and blessed Author! Certainly, had men set their wits at work to burlesque the most sacred thing, and dress it up for laughter and derision, they could never have invented a more ridiculous disguise for it, than this of transubstantiation: besides all this, it introduces two notorious pieces of unrighteousness; the first of which is a most gross and barbarous piece of idolatry, viz. their adoring the consecrated bread with the highest species of divine worship; which, if it be not transubstantiated into the body of Christ, as we are sure it is not, unless our senses lie, and contradictions be true, they themselves confess is as gross idolatry, as the Laplanders worshipping a red cloth hung upon the top of a spear. Now, what monstrous unright-

eousness is this, for men to rob God of his honour, and vest a senseless piece of bread with it, to advance the workmanship of a baker into an equality with God, and then adore, and then devour it? The second piece of unrighteousness which this monstrous figment introduces, is the half-communion; in which the Christian world is most unjustly robbed of one half of that legacy which Christ bequeathed to us in his last will and testament; which, as Bellarmine tells us, was done out of reverence to the transubstantiated wine, lest any drop of it sticking upon laymen's beards should be spilt and profaned. But this inconvenience, by the cardinal's leave, might have otherwise been easily prevented, by prohibiting all laymen, as they do their priests, to receive the sacrament with their beards on. For I am apt to think, there is no good Christian but would have been better contented to lose all his beard than half the sacrament. So that this doctrine of transubstantiation, you see, hath a most unrighteous tendency, both as it disgraces the most righteous religion, and introduces the most gross unrighteousness. Again, thirdly; It is a common principle of Christianity, that true repentance is indispensably necessary to the salvation of sinners; upon which they have superstructed their sacrament of penance; which, joined with absolution, is of such sovereign virtue, as to transubstantiate a sorrow proceeding from the fear of hell, into true and saving repentance: by which doctrine they have most directly superseded all the obligations of righteousness. For what need I put myself to the trouble of a holy and righteous life, when for alarming myself before I go to confession into some frightful apprehensions of hell, I can be dubbed a true penitent, and receive

the remission of my sins? For now my old score being all wiped off, I may sin on merrily on a new account; and when I make my next reckoning, it is but being afraid of hell again, and I am sure to receive a new acquittance in full of all demands and dues. And when I have spent all my life in this round and circle of righteousness, it is but sending for a priest at my last breath, confessing my sins, and dreading the punishment of them, and with a few magical words he shall immediately conjure me to heaven, or at least out of danger of hell. Once more; it is a common principle of Christianity, that *the wages of sin is eternal death*; upon which they have introduced their doctrines of purgatory and indulgences; which, like Simeon and Levi, brethren in iniquity, do both conspire to render righteousness a needless thing. For by the sacrament of penance, the eternal punishment of hell is changed into the temporary one of purgatory; and by indulgences, especially plenary ones, the temporary punishment of purgatory is wholly remitted and extinguished; so that the first lessens the punishment of sin, and the last annihilates it: and by this means are sinners mightily emboldened to go on; being assured, that upon the sacrament of penance they shall commute hell for purgatory; and that upon plenary indulgence, they shall exchange purgatory for heaven. Many other instances of this nature might be given; but it would be endless to enumerate all those unrighteous principles with which their casuistical divinity abounds; the frauds and falsifications, the treasons and murders, the slanders and perjuries, which their guides of conscience do not only tolerate, but commend: for I will maintain, that there is

scarce any villainy in nature so notorious, which by the principles of some or other of their allowed casuists may not be wholly vindicated, or at least extenuated into venial crimes. So that considering the whole frame and structure of the popish religion, I do most seriously believe it to be one of the most effectual engines to undermine and tear up the foundations of righteousness that ever the Devil forged or made use of: and were it not for those common principles of Christianity that do allay, and sometimes, I hope, overpower the venom of it, I am verily persuaded that the religion of heathens would sooner make men righteous than that of papists. For I do affirm, that there is not one principle of pure popery that is either a rule of righteousness or a motive to it; but contrariwise, that the most of its principles seem to have been purposely calculated to affront men's reason and debauch their manners; and if so, then we may easily guess whether this be a true religion or no, which in all its parts is so repugnant to that which God most dearly loves.

2. Hence I infer, upon what terms a man may safely conclude that he is beloved of God: for if he hath that amiable quality within him, which is the eternal reason of God's love, he may be sure he is beloved of him. If our souls be adorned with that righteousness which the righteous Lord loves, we may safely conclude that we are his favourites, and shall never cease to be so whilst we continue so adorned. For it is as impossible for God not to love righteous souls, as not to be righteous himself: for whilst he continues so, his own nature must needs incline him to love all those in whom he finds his own most amiable image and resemblance. Let us

not therefore persuade ourselves that we are beloved of God, either upon any inward whispers and suggestions, or upon any particular marks and signs of grace: for both these may abuse and deceive us, and flatter our minds into false and groundless assurances. We may think it is the Spirit of God that whispers to us, when all of a sudden we feel ourselves surprised with joyous and comfortable thoughts; and yet this may be nothing else but a frisk of melancholy vapours, heated and fermented by a feverish humour. For those sudden joys and dejections, which are so often interpreted the incomes and withdrawings of the Spirit of God, do commonly proceed from no higher cause than the shiverings and burnings of an ague; and I am very sure that hysterical fits are very often mistaken for spiritual experiences; and that when men have most confidently believed themselves overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, their fancies have been only hagged and ridden with the enthusiastic vapours of their own spleen. And sometimes, I make no doubt but this sudden flush of joyous thoughts proceeds from a worse cause, even from the suggestions of the Devil; who, though he hath no immediate access to the minds of men, can yet doubtless act upon our spirits and humours, and by their means figure our fancies into sprightly ideas, and tickle our hearts into a rapture: and this power of his we may reasonably suppose he is ready enough to exert upon any mischievous occasion, when he finds men willing to be deceived and to rely upon ungrounded confidences. Let us not therefore build our hopes of the divine favour upon any such uncertain foundations; but impartially examine ourselves, whether we are really righteous: for, unless we are

so, it is not more certain that God is righteous, than that these our pretended spiritual incomes and inundations of joy and comfort are either the freaks of our own temper, or else the injections of the Devil. For how can you imagine that the God of all righteousness and truth can, without infinite violence to his own nature, either love or pretend love to an unrighteous soul? But then, you will say, by what signs and tokens shall we know whether we are righteous or no? To which I answer, that there is nothing can be a true sign and token of righteousness which is distinct from righteousness itself: for righteousness is its own sign; and if any man judges himself righteous by any mark which is not an act or instance of righteousness, he deceives and abuses his own soul. But then we must take care, that we do not argue upon any one particular mark or instance of righteousness to our being righteous in general. For you may as well argue that you are not blind because you hear well, or that you are not deaf because you taste well, or that you have all your senses because you have one, as that you are righteous in the general because you are so in this or that particular: and you may as reasonably conclude yourself in a state of health because you have a fresh colour, as that you are in a state of grace because you have this or that particular sign of it. Well, but then how shall we resolve ourselves in this most material inquiry? Why, do but consider what it is to be righteous, and then reflect upon your own motions, and you will quickly feel whether you are righteous or no. Now, to be righteous is in the general to intend righteously, and to act accordingly. If you ask again, how you shall know whether you so intend

and act? I shall only answer, that it is an unreasonable question, and that you might as well ask me whether you are hungry or thirsty: for you do as naturally feel the motions of your souls as you do the motions of your bodies; and for you to ask another man what your own intentions are, is to make him a conjurer instead of a casuist. Would it not look extremely ridiculous for a man to ask his creditor, or customer, Good sir, how shall I know whether I intend to pay my debts, or am sincerely resolved not to overreach you? Should any man ask me such a question, I should only bid him consult himself, and if then he suspected his own honesty, I should shrewdly suspect he had too much reason for it. If you intend righteously, you intend it knowingly; and if you knowingly intend it, you cannot but know that you intend it. If you cannot know whether you intend and act righteously, you cannot know how to do it; and if you cannot know how to do it, you are not subjects capable of morality; but must of necessity live and act at random, and blunder on, like travellers in the dark, without being able to determine whether you go backward or forward. If therefore you would know whether you are righteous men or no, do not go about to perplex and entangle yourselves in the wilderness of signs and tokens; for if you had a thousand signs of grace, you can never safely conclude you are righteous, till, upon an impartial review of yourselves, you do feel that you intend and act righteously; and then, and not till then, you may build upon it, that God loves you. For God's love is a constant and immutable thing; and in this the constancy of it consists, not that it is always fixed upon the same person, but that it is un-

changeably determined to the same motive; and this motive is righteousness. So that if he find this motive in us, he will be sure to love us so long as it continues: but if from righteous we become unrighteous, he must either change in his affection, or else cease to love us. For should he still love on, when the reason is ceased for which he loved us, he must either love us for no reason, or for a reason that is directly contrary to that for which he loved us first; and consequently, his love must either be a blind fondness, or else a fickle and inconstant passion. If therefore righteousness be the reason that moves the righteous Lord to love, we grossly flatter and abuse ourselves, if we presume that he loves us while we are unrighteous. Wherefore, as we would not ruin ourselves with relying upon vain hopes, hopes that will sink underneath us, and leave us eternally desperate and miserable, let us never conclude that we are beloved of God, till, upon an impartial trial of ourselves, we can conclude that we are sincerely righteous.

3. From hence I infer, what grand encouragement we have to be righteous: for that God loves righteousness is a plain demonstration that it is the most amiable thing in the world, and that it best deserves the affections of all rational beings, since it hath won his who never loves but upon the best reason. And what a most glorious thing is it to be adorned with the best of beauties, which, by such an invincible charm, endears the heart of the most glorious Being in the world! If there be so much honour paid to a beauty that can smite and enslave an earthly potentate, what is there due to that, that can constrain the God of heaven and earth to fall in love with us?

For what higher mark can our ambition aim at, than that of being beloved by the greatest and most lovely Being? Doubtless, to be God's favourite and image is the highest advancement that any creature can aspire to; and were I born king of all the kings of the earth, and had all their crowns and sceptres at my feet, I am sure my reason would tell me, that to be beloved of God would be a greater glory to me, than to be obeyed from pole to pole: and should I entertain a thought of exchanging the honour of being a godlike creature, and the favourite of Heaven, for the crown and empire of the world, my conscience would tell me that I degraded myself, and prostituted my own glory: for next to that of being a God myself, the highest glory I can think of is to be a friend to God; and this I am sure to be as soon as I commence a righteous man. And shall I stand so much in my own light, O foolish creature that I am! as to refuse his friendship, when I may have it on such reasonable terms, and shall need no other endearment to introduce me into his favour, but only that of righteousness? "O thou most excellent "beauty, with whose charms the God of heaven is "inflamed! what shall I do to make thee mine? "how shall I obtain to be adorned with thy heaven-"ly lustre? I will go to the blessed Fountain from "whence thou art derived; and with a heart hun-"gering and thirsting after thee, beseech him to in-"fuse thy streams into my soul. I will shun what-"soever is contrary to thee, and do whatsoever thou "commandest me, and never cease writing after thy "fair copies, till I have transcribed thee into my na-"ture." And who would not, that sets any value upon the glory of being dear to God? For besides

the honour of being his favourites, what an infinite advantage may we expect to reap from it! For what may we not promise ourselves from the grace and favour of the great Sovereign of beings, who doth whatsoever pleases him in both worlds, and hath the absolute disposal of all the blessings that either heaven or earth affords? Doubtless we may safely promise ourselves every thing, both from below and above, that can either do us good here, or contribute to our happiness hereafter. For so the Psalmist tells us, that such is his love of righteousness, that he *will give both grace and glory, and that no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*, Psalm lxxxiv. 11. Who would not then be tempted to righteousness upon the prospect of being a favourite of God, and of the infinite glory and advantage which redounds from thence?

4. And lastly, From hence I infer, how inexcusable we are if we persist in sin, after the many discoveries which God hath made to us of his love of righteousness. Had we any reason to suppose that God is indifferently affected towards righteousness and sin, it would be a fair excuse for unrighteous persons: for what great matter would it be which of the two contraries we chose, if both were indifferent to God, who best understands the worth and value of things? But now, when God hath discovered such a zealous concern for righteousness, and such an abhorrence of its contrary, by so many clear indications both natural and supernatural, there is no ground or colour for any such excuse. For now no man can be excusably ignorant which way God's heart is inclined; and we must wilfully shut our eyes, if we do not discern which of the two contraries he would have us pur-

sue; and therefore, if, notwithstanding this, we still persist in unrighteousness, we do in effect declare that we regard not God, and that we will do what we list, let him will what he pleases; that in the conduct of our actions we will have the sole disposal of ourselves, and are resolved that God shall have nothing to do with us, and that we will not concern ourselves in any of our choices or actions, whether he be pleased or displeased with them: this is the plain sense of our perseverance in unrighteousness under all those clear discoveries which God hath made of his aversion to it. Now how inexcusable is this, for a creature to behave itself so insolently towards the Author and Owner of its being; to make him stand for a cipher in his own creation, and to take no more notice of him than if he were the most impertinent and insignificant being in the world! For now it is plain, that our unrighteous doings proceed from our rude contempt and regardlessness of his heavenly will: we know well enough what he would have us do, but either we do not think him worth the minding, or, if we do, we are resolved to behave ourselves as if we did not. It is true he hath not made as full a discovery of his will to some as he hath to others; but yet it is plain he hath so sufficiently discovered it to all, that none can pretend to the excuse of ignorance. For as for the heathens, though they have no revealed discoveries of it without them, yet they have a Bible within them, the large and legible Bible of nature, which lies continually open before them, and proposes to their view in fair and distinct characters the notion of God, the distinctions of good and evil, and the eternal laws of righteousness: and therefore, if, notwithstanding this, they will be so

regardless of its great and blessed Author, as either not to attend to, or not comply with these natural discoveries of his will, what excuse can they make why they should not perish in their own obstinacy? For, as the apostle tells us, though *they have not the law*, i. e. the revealed law, *yet they did* (or at least might have done) *by nature the things contained in the law;* and therefore, *as many of them as have sinned without this revealed law, shall also perish without it;* that is, by the sentence of the law of nature, Rom. ii. 12, 14. And then, as for the Jews, besides those natural indications of God's love of righteousness which they had in common with the heathen, they had sundry supernatural ones; they had sundry great and notorious examples of God's rewarding righteous and punishing wicked men, and the outward revelation of the law of Moses, the moral part of which was a new edition of the law of nature, and did contain within the rind and letter of it the most sublime and spiritual precepts of righteousness: and the ceremonial part of which was, though an obscure, yet intelligible representation of all those spiritual motives to righteousness which Christianity contains. So that, would they but have attended either to the spiritual sense of their law, or to the sermons of their prophets, which very much cleared and explained it, they could not have been ignorant either of any part of their duty, or of any considerable motive that was needful to press and engage them to it. If therefore, notwithstanding this, they were so regardless of God, as to take no notice of those many sensible distinctions which his providence hath made between righteous and unrighteous men, in blessing the one and punishing the

other, of which he gave them so many signal examples; if they had so little reverence for his authority, as neither to mind his law within nor his law without them; or if they, minding the latter, were so extremely heedless, as to rest in a mere conformity to the letter of it, without ever attending to its spiritual sense or meaning, upon what reasonable pretence can their stupidity be excused? But then, lastly, as for us Christians, we have not only all those natural indications of God's love of righteousness which the heathens had, and all those supernatural ones which the Jews had, but we have all these latter with much greater advantage than the Jews: for they are all set before us in a clearer light, and presented much more naked to our view. For, as they are proposed to us, they are neither wrapt up in mystical senses, nor clouded over with typical representations; but laid before us in the most plain and easy propositions. The literal sense of our precepts of righteousness, and of all our promises and threats, is the mystical sense of theirs; and all those Christian motives to righteousness which were delivered to them in dark riddles and obscure and typical adumbrations, are brought forth to us from behind the curtain, and proposed in plain and popular articles of faith: so that if we still continue in unrighteousness, we are of all men in the world the most inexcusable. The heathens may plead against the Jews, that their law of nature was not so clear in its precepts, nor yet so cogent in its motives, as the law of Moses was. The Jews may plead against us Christians, that their law of Moses was neither so express in its precepts, nor yet so intelligible in its best and most powerful motives; but as for us Christians, we have nothing at

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